EMPIRE, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE ON THE MIDDLE EUPHRATES

DURENES, PALMYRENES, VILLAGERS AND SOLDIERS[1]

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Needless to say, the heading of this contribution is inspired by the title of Fergus Millar's article in the *Journal of Jewish Studies* of 1987, one of the *Vorstudien* to his monograph on the Roman Near East and the text of his Camden Inaugural of 1986, and simply meant in *hommage*.[2] My focus will be on the Middle Euphrates - with the uniquely preserved Dura-Europos as its best-known urban settlement; with a series of villages (known mostly from two papyrological dossiers) situated along the river, especially near its confluence with its main tributary the Khabur and along the Khabur itself; and with the military stations on the Euphrates - and on the impact (or lack of it) on the region's communities of the culture of Palmyra, the grand oasis city situated ca 140 miles towards the west in the middle of the Syrian steppe.

With the evidence currently available to students of the area, we now seem a world removed from the time when George Rawlinson, Camden Professor of Ancient History from 1861 to 1889, wrote his then ground-breaking book about the Parthian world, a volume in which the Euphrates region only features when the river is crossed in the context of military campaigns - written as it was long before the discovery of Dura-Europos, without the availability of the papyrological dossiers from the area, and totally unaware of the extent of Palmyra's control over the empire's frontier zone.[3] The ruins of Palmyra itself had been known to the western world

[1] It was an immense honour to speak at All Souls College, Oxford in July 2015 in celebration of the eightieth birthday of my DPhil supervisor, whose work on the Roman Near East was the only reason why I first came to the UK in 1995. I am very grateful to Nicholas Purcell for his kind invitation and to Robert Parker for his warm introduction. I have benefited greatly from discussions with three friends in particular, Leonardo Gregoratti (who also commented in detail on a section of the revised text of the article), Olivier Hekster and Michael Sommer. Part of this article was further developed for a joint seminar of Universidad de Sevilla and Universidad Pablo de Olavide at Seville in November 2015 and for a conference at the Norwegian Institute in Athens in December 2015, and I am grateful to Fernando Lozano Gómez, Elena Muñiz Grijalvo and Eivind Heldaas Seland not only for the respective invitations, but also for the fruitful discussions. I also learnt a great deal, as always, from conversations with Jen Baird and Simon James. It must be emphasised that none of the above necessarily agree with everything that is said in this paper.

[2] F. Millar, 'Empire, community and culture in the Roman Near East: Greeks, Syrians, Jews and Arabs', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 38 (1987) 143-164.

[3] G. Rawlinson, *The Sixth Great Oriental Monarchy or the Geography, History, and Antiquities of Parthia Collected and Illustrated from Ancient and Modern Sources* (London, 1873). Cf. ibid., 326, where he referred to

since the late seventeenth century, when British merchants who were based at Aleppo visited the site.[4] Dura-Europos, on the other hand, was nothing but a name (or rather, two names), known from a mention in the *Parthian Stations* of Isidorus of Charax, who wrote in the early first century AD: Δοῦρα, Νικάνορος πόλις, κτίσμα Μακεδόνων ὑπο δὲ Ἑλλήνων Εὔρωπος καλεῖται ('Dura, the city of Nikanor, a foundation by the Macedonians that is called Europos by the Greeks'),[5] and various voices of the time opted to locate it on the eastern side of the Euphrates - perhaps most notably the explorer Gertrude Bell who set out in her 1909 journey along the then uncharted east bank of the river to identify the stations listed by Isidorus.[6] It was not until the early 1920s that the ruins on the plateau of Salihiyah on the west bank of the Euphrates could be confidently identified as those of Dura-Europos, first by the one-day mission in May 1920 of James Henry Breasted, founding-director of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, and especially by two brief campaigns conducted on behalf of the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* in Paris by the Belgian Privatgelehrter Franz Cumont in 1922 and 1923.[7] In a letter to Cumont written on 20 June 1922, Breasted showed his

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the battle near Europos as recorded by Lucian (*Hist. conscr.* 28, in which a contemporary historian is criticised for a digression on the activities of a Moorish rider; cf. ibid., 20, on the exaggerated number of casualties in combat, and 24, on the site's wrong location). Cf. V. Chapot, *La frontière de l'Euphrate de Pompée à la conquête arabe* (Paris, 1907) 280 with n.1, another gem of this era. For the identification of Lucian's Europos with Dura-Europos, cf. F. Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos, 1922-1923* [*BAH* 9] (Paris, 1926) LII n.3 and LXVI.

[4] For the best accounts of how Palmyra was 'saved from the sand', cf. J. Starcky and M. Gawlikowski, *Palmyre*[2] (Paris, 1985) 22-27, and E. Will, *Les palmyréniens. La Venise des sables* (Paris, 1992) 13-18 ("Palmyre sauvée des sables"). Of particular value are the drawings which the French artist Louis-François Cassas made in the late eighteenth century: cf. T. Ketelsen (ed.), *Palmyra. Was bleibt? Louis-François Cassas und seine Reise in den Orient* [*Der un/gewisse Blick* 20] (Cologne, 2016), a catalogue accompanying an exhibition at the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum. Cf. A. Invernizzi, 'La relazione di Palmira del conte Vidua, 1820', in B. Bastl, V. Gassner and U. Muss (eds.), *Zeitreisen: Syrien - Palmyra - Rom. Festschrift für Andreas Schmidt-Colinet zum 65. Geburtstag* (Vienna, 2010) 103-111, on the visit by Count Carlo Vidua di Conzano who according to his records had counted 371 columns still standing at the time, and J.-B. Yon, 'Un drogman de Palmyre à Chicago', *Tempora. Annales d'histoire et d'archéologie* 20-21 (2011-12) 79-95, on the early days of tourism to the oasis towards the end of the nineteenth century.

[5] Isid. Char. *Mans. Parth.* 1. For the text and commentary, cf. the edition by W.H. Schoff (Philadelphia, 1914) and *FGrH* 781, with the entry by D.W. Roller in *Brill's New Jacoby* (online). The traditional interpretation of the route described by Isidorus as being foremost connected to long-distance trade has been convincingly countered by N. Kramer, 'Das Itinerar Σταθμοι Παρθικοι des Isidor von Charax - Beschreibung eines Handelsweges?', *Klio* 85 (2003) 120-130. An article on the subject has been announced, by S.R. Hauser, 'Isidor von Charax Σταθμοὶ Παρθικοί. Annäherungen an den Autor, den Routenverlauf und die Bedeutung des Werkes', in J. Wiesehöfer and S. Müller (eds.), *Parthika* [*Classica et Orientalia*] (Wiesbaden, forthcoming).

[6] G. Bell, *Amurath to Amurath* (London, 1911) 112-3 for the identification of Abu'l Ḥassan, on the east side of the river, as Isidorus' *Dura Nicanoris*. The book received a second edition in 1924, by which time the correct identification had just been made, but the section could of course not yet have been updated. For a map showing the route Bell took with the identifications proposed in her book, see http://www.presscom.co.uk/ammap/3842b.html.

[7] For the story of the now legendary excavations at Salihiyah, cf. the classic account by C. Hopkins, *The Discovery of Dura-Europos*, ed. B. Goldman (New Haven - London, 1979). I am currently preparing the

delight that Cumont had "found Doura noted by the Greek geographers", since his own "conjecture that Doura might be Ṣâliḥîyah was a pure guess."[8] The name of Dura had first appeared to Breasted on one of the two frescoes he had seen *in situ*, the one now known as that of the sacrifice by the tribune Julius Terentius, where, in the bottom left corner, under the three Palmyrene gods who are the recipients of the sacrifice by the tribune and his soldiers, two city protectresses with *corona muralis* are seated, labelled in Greek paint as the 'Tyche of Palmyra' (Τύχη Παλμύρων) and the 'Tyche of Dura' (Τύχη Δούρας).[9] Since the ruins at Salihiyah could obviously not be those of Palmyra, Breasted simply deduced (correctly as it proved) that the Tyche of Dura concerned the tutelary deity of the place where the building with the frescoes was located. The formulation in the letter implies that Cumont had told him that the place-name appears in a number of Classical sources,[10] but once the Belgian had started his own excavations later in the year, Breasted's hypothesis was swiftly verified by the discovery of a Greek parchment that referred to the local citizens as Εὐρωπαῖοι,[11] so that now the two alternative names for the town as presented by Isidorus of Charax were both attested in local documentation.

Problems concerning the periodization of Dura-Europos

It has been convincingly argued that the site's expansion into a proper little city, with a gridiron

historiographical introductions to two volumes in the *Bibliotheca Cumontiana* of the Belgian Historical Institute and the Academia Belgica in Rome: the republication of Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos*, which will be republished as *Scripta Maiora* XI (series editor: Corinne Bonnet) and Cumont's articles, notes, and reviews on Dura-Europos which will be collected as *Scripta Minora* VII (series editor: Danny Praet).

[8] The letter is preserved in the archives of the Academia Belgica in Rome under catalogue number 6987 XL.

[9] The fresco has been the subject of much debate. Cf. T. Pekáry, 'Das Opfer vor dem Kaiserbild', *Bonner Jahrbücher* 186 (1986), 91-103 (with whose thesis that the recipients of the sacrifice were Roman emperors rather than Palmyrene deities I disagree); O. Stoll, *Zwischen Integration und Abgrenzung: die Religion des Römischen Heeres im Nahen Osten. Studien zum Verhältnis von Armee und Zivilbevölkerung im römischen Syrien und den Nachbargebieten* (St. Katharinen, 2001), 367-379; T. Kaizer, 'A note on the fresco of Iulius Terentius from Dura-Europos', in R. Rollinger and B. Truschnegg (eds.), *Altertum und Mittelmeerraum: Die antike Welt diesseits und jenseits der Levante. Festschrift für Peter W. Haider zum 60. Geburstag* [*Oriens et Occidens* 12] (Stuttgart, 2006) 151-159; L. Dirven, 'The Julius Terentius fresco and the Roman imperial cult', *Mediterraneo Antico* 10 (2007) 115-128; M.K. Heyn, 'The Terentius frieze in context', in L. Brody and G. Hoffman (eds.), *Dura-Europos: Crossroads of Antiquity* (Chestnut Hill, Mass., 2011) 221-233.

[10] Indeed, in his letter to Breasted written on 5 June (preserved in archives of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago), Cumont had written: "Δούρα est connu par les géographes grecs et répond à la position de Sâliḥiáh", but without actually providing the relevant references.

[11] F. Cumont, 'Rapport sur une mission à Sâlihîyeh sur l'Euphrate' in *CRAI* (1923) 12-41, at 37-38. Cf. C.B. Welles, R.O. Fink and J.F. Gilliam, *The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Final Report* V, part I. *The Parchments and Papyri* (New Haven, 1959) no.17.

plan filling out a large part of the area surrounded by fortifications, had only taken place by the mid-second century BC, and that the Europos that had been founded under the first Seleucid king - on a plateau that had been known as Dura (*Dawara*, meaning 'fortress') since time immemorial[12] - was simply a fortress located on the north-eastern edge of that same plateau.[13] After the *phrourion* had grown into a *polis*, Dura-Europos fell under Parthian control towards the end of the second century BC (although the traditional date of 113 BC has now been questioned[14]). A short period of Roman occupation in the course of Trajan's Parthian campaign aside,[15] the town is supposed to have stayed Parthian until it finally became integrated into the provincial system of the Roman empire.[16] This moment is traditionally dated to AD 165, during the Parthian campaign of Marcus Aurelius' adoptive brother Lucius Verus, but it is important to realise - as Jen Baird has recently emphasised - that there is no "observable archaeological horizon which distinguishes the start of the Roman period" at Dura-Europos and that "the

[12] According to a cuneiform table reused in the wall of the temple of Atargatis, cf. F.J. Stephens, 'A cuneiform table from Dura-Europas [*sic*]', *Revue d'Assyriologie* 34 (1937) 183-190.

[13] P. Leriche, 'Europos-Doura hellénistique', in *La Syrie hellénistique* [*Topoi* Suppl. 4] (Lyon, 2003) 171-191; id., 'Europos-Doura séleucide', in E. Dąbrowa (ed.), *New Studies on the Seleucids* [*Electrum* 18] (Cracow, 2011) 23-40. However, the proposition has been questioned by L. Hannestad, 'The Seleucid Kingdom', in D.T. Potts (ed.), *A Companion to the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East* II [*Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World*] (Malden, Mass. - Oxford, 2012) 984-1000, at 992; ead., 'A royal signature landscape: new light on the transformation of northern Syria after the conquest of Alexander', in A. Ivantchik (ed.), Monumentum Gregorianum. *Sbornik naučnych statej pamjati akademika Grigoriia Maksimovicha Bongard Levina* (Moscow, 2013) 250-274, at 267. On the identification of the Nikanor who appears in the above-mentioned passage of Isidorus, cf. A. Primo, 'Le surnom Nikanor de Séleucos I[er]. Observations sur la fondation de Doura Europos et d'Antioche de Mygdonie', *L'Antiquité Classique* 80 (2011) 179-184. Cf. P.J. Kosmin, 'The foundation and early life of Dura-Europos', in L.R. Brody and G.L. Hoffman (eds.), *Dura-Europos: Crossroads of Antiquity* (Chestnut Hill, MA, 2011) 95-109.

[14] J. Gaslain, (2012), 'Quelques remarques sur la politique imperiale des Parthes Arsacides et la prise d'Europos-Doura', in P. Leriche, G. Coqueugniot and S. De Pontbriand (eds.), *Europos-Doura. Varia* I [*BAH* 198] (Beirut, 2012) 255-266, at 263-265, whose more nuanced argument would place the beginning of the Arsacid occupation of Dura-Europos at some point between 115 and 105 BC, "plus vraisemblablement entre 115 et 110".

[15] As witnessed by an arch set up outside the walls of Dura-Europos in honour of the emperor by a detachment of *Legio III Cyrenaica*, and by an inscription from AD 116/7 recording the restoration of a shrine following pillaging by Roman soldiers, cf. T. Kaizer, 'Dura-Europos under Roman rule', in J.M. Cortés Copete, E. Muñiz Grijalvo and F. Lozano Gómez (eds.), *Ruling the Greek World: Approaches to the Roman Empire in the East* [*Potsdamer Altertumswissenschaftliche Beiträge* 52] (Stuttgart, 2015) 91-101, at 91-92 for references. With the help of satellite imagery, the location of both the military camp of the imperial army and of the actual battle between Parthian defenders and Roman attackers in 115 has now been proposed, cf. S. James, 'Of colossal camps and a new Roman battlefield: remote sensing, archival archaeology and the 'conflict landscape' of Dura-Europos, Syria', in D.J. Breeze, R.H. Jones and I.A. Oltean (eds.), *Understanding Roman Frontiers. A Celebration for Professor Bill Hanson* (Edinburgh, 2015) 328-345.

[16] On Parthian Dura-Europos, cf. F. Millar, *The Roman Near East, 31 BC - AD 337* (Cambridge, Mass. - London, 1993) 445-452; id., 'Dura-Europos under Parthian rule', in J. Wiesehöfer (ed.), *Das Partherreich und seine Zeugnisse* [*Historia Einzelschriften* 122] (Stuttgart, 1998) 473-492 = id., *The Greek World, the Jews and the East. Rome, the Greek World and the East* III, eds. H.M. Cotton and G.M. Rogers (Chapel Hill, 2006) 406-431; L. Gregoratti, 'Dura-Europos: a Greek town of the Parthian empire', in T. Kaizer (ed.), *Religion, Society and Culture at Dura-Europos* [*Yale Classical Studies* 38] (Cambridge, 2016) 16-29. On Roman Dura-Europos,

marked change seems not to come with the arrival of Roman control, *c.*165 CE, but in the early third century, when a Roman garrison expanded within the city's walls."[17] A brief Sasanian occupation in around AD 253 remains disputed, but the forces of Shapur I, Sasanian King of Kings, certainly captured the town a few years later.[18]

This clear-cut periodization (first Seleucids, then Parthians from ca 113 BC until AD 165, and finally Romans until the Sasanian siege around the middle of the 250s) is still commonly adhered to, although in recent years it has come under some scholarly scrutiny. As we have seen, the traditional date of AD 165 for the beginning of the Roman period at Dura-Europos is not based on archaeological evidence, but, as Baird has put it, "comes … from the historical understanding of the Roman campaigns in the region at this time."[19] In 2004, in a paper that has perhaps not received the attention it deserves, Andreas Luther went further, arguing that the evidence leaves open the possibility that the Parthians had remained in power in Dura-Europos following AD 165 at least in name, and that the town became part of a Roman province only at the time of the Parthian campaigns of Septimius Severus in the 190s.[20] His intricate argument postulates a situation around 165 in which Dura remained formally part of the Arsacid realm, but was controlled indirectly by Rome, namely through archers from Palmyra.[21] Luther

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cf. Millar, *The Roman Near East*, 467-471; Kaizer, 'Dura-Europos under Roman rule', 91-101.

[17] J.A. Baird, *The Inner Lives of Ancient Houses. An Archaeology of Dura-Europos* (Oxford, 2014) 60.

[18] On the dating and the possibility of an earlier Sasanian occupation, cf. S. James, 'Dura-Europos and the chronology of Syria in the 250s AD', *Chiron* 15 (1985) 111-124; D.J. MacDonald, 'Dating the fall of Dura Europos', *Historia* 35 (1986) 45-68; F. Grenet, 'Les Sassanides à Doura-Europos (253 ap. J.-C.). Réexamen du matériel épigraphique iranien du site', in P.-L. Gatier, B. Helly and J.-P. Rey-Coquais (eds.), *Géographie historique au Proche-Orient (Syrie, Phénicie, Arabie, grecques, romaines, byzantines)* (Paris, 1988) 133-158. On various aspects of the siege, cf. P. Leriche, 'Techniques de guerre sassanides et romaines à Doura-Europos', in F. Vallet and M. Kazanski (eds.), *L'armée romaine et les barbares du III^e^ au VII^e^ siècle* [*Mémoires publiées par l'Association Française d'Archéologie Mérovingienne (A.F.A.M.)* 5] (Rouen - Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 1993) 83-100; S.N.C. Lieu, 'Rome on the Euphrates. The final siege of Dura-Europos', in R. Alston and S. Lieu (eds.), *Aspects of the Roman East. Papers in Honour of Professor Fergus Millar FBA* I [*Studia Antiqua Australiensia* 3] (Turnhout, 2007) 33-61; S. James, 'Stratagems, combat, and "chemical warfare" in the siege mines of Dura-Europos', *American Journal of Archaeology* 115 (2011) 69-101.

[19] Baird, *The Inner Lives of Ancient Houses*, 111. Cf. Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos*, LIII: "Les légions réoccupèrent Doura, sans doute en 165." Concerning the lack of archaeological sources for a change of rulership at this time one might ask what sort of evidence could actually have been expected to illustrate the process through which a self-governing Greek town became incorporated into the Roman provincial system but without modifications in the form of a Roman garrison taking over part of it.

[20] A. Luther, 'Dura-Europos zwischen Palmyra und den Parthern: der politische Status der Region am Mittleren Euphrat im 2. Jh. n. Chr. und die Organisation des palmyrenischen Fernhandels', in R. Rollinger and C. Ulf (eds.), *Commerce and Monetary Systems in the Ancient World. Means of Transmission and Cultural Interaction* [*Oriens et Occidens* 6] (Stuttgart, 2004) 327-351.

[21] Ibid., esp. at 333: "zunächst scheint die Stadt durch eine Abteilung palmyrenischer Bogenschützen kontrolliert worden zu sein, die als Angehörige des Römischen Reiches indirekt die römischen Sicherheitsinteressen vertraten"; for a similarly clear exposition of the thesis, cf. ibid.: 336, 343. The key points of his arguments are

furthermore argued that this situation, in which the Palmyrenes occupied Parthian territories along the Euphrates "im römischen Auftrag", occurred already well before Verus' campaigns, and that what he labelled as a 'Roman-Palmyrene protectorate on the Euphrates' could have taken shape in its early stages in the aftermath of Trajan's Parthian war.[22] Luther's major contribution is to make one question the straightforwardness of the long phase between the Seleucid and the Roman periods of Dura-Europos, but his own solution involves power structures and arrangements between the protagonists that still seem very formal. Instead it might be helpful to think of a situation characterised even more by blurriness and taking into account more fully the ambiguity that so often seems to surround the Palmyrenes. In such a scenario, the Palmyrenes could have managed - not so much on behalf of Rome but on their own initiative - to step into a power vacuum that had appeared in the Middle Euphrates region. In any case, the notion that Palmyra's territory around the middle of the second century AD reached the Euphrates is also reflected by Appian in the Preface to his *Roman History*,[23] and could be the explanation behind a contemporaneous memento inscription in Palmyrenean Aramaic (found near the Euphrates on Iraqi territory) of a man who had travelled 'to the limit of the frontier' (*brš qṣt'*) during the 'generalship' (*'ṣṭrṭgw*) of a certain Yarhai.[24] If 'power

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a) that neither the Roman citizenship of one Durene in the 160s nor the use of Roman dating formulas should count as unequivocal evidence that the town was by then Roman territory; b) that the Parthian court title in a papyrus from AD 180 would be very hard to explain if the town had by then been truly Roman for fifteen years; and c) that there is no evidence before the 180s for soldiers fighting under the imperial flag stationed at the Euphrates stronghold. For Luther, the fact the archers from Palmyra were *Palmyrene* soldiers rather than regular imperial forces is a sign of the necessary compromise established between Parthians and Romans. Cf. ibid.: 336: "Allerdings muß eine derartige Regelung nicht bedeutet haben, daß der parthische König generell die Oberhoheit Roms anerkennen mußte."

[22] Cf. ibid. 337, 341. For comments on how Trajan's campaign can be viewed as serving to provide prospects for Palmyra in the Middle Euphrates region, see M. Sommer, *Roms orientalische Steppengrenze. Palmyra - Edessa - Dura-Europos - Hatra. Eine Kulturgeschichte von Pompeius bis Diocletian* [*Oriens et Occidens* 9] (Stuttgart, 2005) 311; P.M. Edwell, *Between Rome and Persia: the Middle Euphrates, Mesopotamia and Palmyra under Roman Control* (London - New York, 2008) 21.

[23] App. *Proem.* 2: μέχρι ἐπὶ ποταμὸν Εὐφράτην ἀπο θαλάσσης ἄνω Παλμυρηνοί τε καὶ ἡ Παλμυρηνῶν ψάμμος ἐπ' αὐτὸν Εὐφράτην καθήκουσα ('the parts stretching from the sea as far inland as the river Euphrates, namely Palmyra and the sandy country round about, extending even to the Euphrates itself'). Cf. M. Gawlikowski, 'Palmyra as a trading centre', *Iraq* 56 (1994) 27-33, at 31. Cf. id., 'Palmyre et l'Euphrate', *Syria* 60 (1983) 53-68, at 62, where the reference to 'the city of Anatha with its surrounding territory' (Ἀναθαν πόλιν σ[ὺ]ν τῇ περιχώρῳ) in the trilingual rock-cut inscription from Naqsh-e Rustam recording the achievements of the Sasanian King of Kings Shapur I (*ŠKZ*) is interpreted as "le limes palmyrénien". For the Greek text of the inscription, cf. A. Maricq, 'Classica et Orientalia: 5. Res Gestae Divi Saporis', *Syria* 35 (1958) 295-360, at section 12; for the Parthian text, cf. P. Huyse, *Die Dreisprachige Inschrift Šābuhrs I. an Der Ka'ba-I Zardušt (ŠKZ)* [*Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum* III.1] (London, 1999), at section 11.

[24] D.R. Hillers and E. Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts* (Baltimore - London, 1996) no.2810. Cf. J. Starcky, 'Une inscription palmyrénienne trouvée près de l'Euphrate, *Syria* 40 (1963) 47-55, with Millar, *The Roman Near East*, 134. Hillers and Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*, 407, noted that the phrase *brš qṣt'* could also be

vacuum' is too strong a term in this context (because the local authority certainly continues to function), one could at least think of a situation in which the often fluctuating degree of Parthian influence had been diminished to the point that the Arsacids were not exercising a tight control over the region themselves. After all, the configuration of what we call the Parthian 'empire' was very different from that of the Roman empire: indirect control - through 'minor' kings as at Hatra, through communities such as those of the Jews, and through cities like Susa (Seleucia-ad-Eulaeum) - was the norm, not the neat provincial structure as we know it from Rome. And being part of the Arsacid realm did not mean continuously belonging to it in equal measure. As for the Romans, since the Middle Euphrates zone had not enduringly belonged to their empire they would not stand to lose anything and might have simply allowed it to happen. With Dura-Europos at the end of the shortest route from Palmyra to the Euphrates, connections between the two sites existed anyway, and it should not be considered inappropriate that in a time of diminishing influence from an imperial centre on its fringes relationships between different peripheral places became stronger. Although it must obviously remain a hypothesis, it is certainly possible to suggest circumstances in which the Palmyrenes - who, as we will see below, are already attested at Dura-Europos in inscriptions from the first century BC - would have become the major power in the small town in the course of the second century AD, especially in the period between the 160s and Severus' Parthian campaigns.[25] That is not to suggest that the Palmyrenes came to control Dura-Europos politically. The civic Greek authority continued to function (although it is hard to say whether it continued to have real authority) and in the scenario that I am sketching here the Palmyrenes would certainly have needed to collaborate with the local ruling class. It is not implausible that a self-governing town would have been quite happy - at a time that Palmyra was reaching new levels of wealth thanks to a boom in its long-distance trade - to subject to the military forces of the caravan city, as advantages could be expected to follow, especially with a view to Roman hegemony over large parts of the Near East. Whether this postulated Palmyrene ascendancy could have gone back to the time that Rome withdrew from its newly acquired territories across the Euphrates (by the

translated as 'at the head of a unit'. With regard to the position of *strategos*, cf. J.-B. Yon, *Les notables de Palmyre* [*BAH* 163] (Beirut, 2002) 115: "Cette function ne me semble pas être liée à une région précise, mais plutôt à des opérations ponctuelles".

[25] Scholars have long debated whether Palmyrene archers were already stationed in Parthian Dura-Europos, a notion that seems to go back to M. Rostovtzeff, 'Deux notes sur des trouvailles de la dernière campagne de fouilles à Doura-Europos', *CRAI* 79 (1935) 285-304, at 301. Cf. Gawlikowski, 'Palmyre et l'Euphrate', 61; L. Dirven, *The Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos. A Study of Religious Interaction in Roman Syria* [*RGRW* 138] (Leiden - Boston - Cologne, 1999) 235; Edwell, *Between Rome and Persia*, 116-117; A.M. Smith II, *Roman*

end of Trajan's life or at least on the accession of Hadrian) is another matter. With Rome conspicuously making a step backwards and the Arsacids possibly not yet strong enough to regain all their possessions, this may well have presented itself as an opportunity not to be wasted. But if it is indeed correct to think that the Palmyrenes had come to control Dura-Europos and the adjacent region on their own initiative (though not necessarily primarily with a view towards protecting and supporting their long-distance trade) they would still have helped to ensure, indirectly, Roman interests and security along the Middle Euphrates.[26] After all, the Palmyrenes had long had a reputation for looking both east- and westwards, and for being looked at by both East and West, as Pliny the Elder notes in an oft-quoted passage.[27] If it is indisputable that by the second century AD Palmyra had been properly integrated in the Roman provincial system, the question remains *to what degree* the city counted as 'Roman' - a question that will evoke different answers for different periods.[28] For the Hadrianic period it ought in any case to be acknowledged that the emperor included Palmyra in his provincial tour and that the city became formally renamed after him.[29] But simultaneously, Palmyrenes can be said to have

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Palmyra. Identity, Community, & State Formation (Oxford - New York, 2013) 147.

[26] Note, however, that this does of course not imply a power void on the part of the Arsacids. *P. Dura* 20, of AD 121, mentions a number of Parthian office holders, including a eunuch who was an *arkapat* and who was one of the people of someone who was described as 'member of the order of the *padheshah* and of the Freemen, tax collector and governor of Mesopotamia and Parapotamia and ruler over the Arabs' (τῶν βάτησα καὶ τ[ῶν] ἐλευθέ[ρ]ων παρα[λ]ήπτου καὶ στρατηγοῦ Μεσοποταμίας καὶ Παραποταμίας καὶ Ἀραβάρχου). This suggests that officials with substantial autonomy and power had either been appointed by the Parthian king or had otherwise emerged and were then invested with formal authority by the King of Kings.

[27] Plin. *HN* 5.88: *privata sorte inter duo imperia summa Romanorum Parthorumque et prima in discordia semper utrimque cura* ('though placed between the two great empires of Rome and Parthia, it still maintains its independence; never failing, at the very first moment that a rupture between them is threatened, to attract the careful attention of both'). On this passage, cf. E. Will, 'Pline l'ancien et Palmyre: un problème d'histoire ou d'histoire littéraire?', *Syria* 62 (1985) 263-269 = id., *De l'Euphrate au Rhin. Aspects de l'hellénisation et de la romanisation du Proche-Orient* [*BAH* 135] (Beirut, 1995) 525-531; now also E.H. Seland, *Ships of the Desert and Ships of the Sea. Palmyra in the World Trade of the First Three Centuries CE, Philippika* 101 (Wiesbaden, 2016) 25.

[28] For a useful overview, cf. T. Gnoli, 'Identità complesse. Uno studio su Palmira', in id. and F. Muccioli (eds.), *Incontri tra culture nell'Oriente ellenistico e romano* (Milan, 2007) 167-198.

[29] A bilingual inscription from AD 130/1 refers to Hadrian's visit to Palmyra: Hillers and Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*, no.0305 = *IGLS* XVII.1 ([*BAH* 195] ed. J.-B. Yon, 2012), no.145. For A.R. Birley, *Hadrian. The Restless Emperor* (London and New York, 1997) 230, the city "may indeed have still been technically outside the empire, a client-state" at the time of the emperor's visit. The renaming is evidenced above all in the Aramaic part of the famous Palmyrene tax law of AD 137, where the addition is made to Palmyra's indigenous name, cf. Hillers and Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*, no.0259: *hdryn' tdmr* ('Hadrianè Tadmor'). The Greek part of a bilingual inscription from AD 131 set up at the agora in honour of a prominent citizen specifies the latter as Ἁδριανὸς Παλμυρηνός, cf. Hillers and Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*, no.1374 = *IGLS* XVII.1, no.245. That the label stuck well into the time that Palmyra had become a *colonia* is clear from inscriptions from Egypt and Rome: *SEG* 34, 1585 (AD 216) and Hillers and Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*, no.0247 (AD 236: Greek part of a bilingual), respectively. On city names and titles under Hadrian in general, cf. M.T. Boatwright, *Hadrian and the Cities of the Roman Empire* (Princeton, 2000) 104-105.

formed part of what recently has been referred to as the 'Parthian commonwealth'.[30]

It is only in the Severan period that Palmyrene soldiers formally fighting under Roman flag came to be stationed at the Euphrates stronghold, in the form of *cohors XX Palmyrenorum*, the best-known auxiliary unit of the imperial army which had its headquarters at the small town and whose soldiers and commander are famously depicted on the above-mentioned fresco of the sacrifice by the tribune Julius Terentius.[31] Regardless of whether Roman rule at Dura-Europos became properly established only now (following the scenario based in part on Luther's thesis and sketched above) or whether it simply became more intensified at this time (following the traditional view), it seems clear that the new imperial regime decided to make an end to a situation that could have been interpreted as make-believe and forced the soldiers from Palmyra into a suitable Roman unit. But it could perhaps also be viewed as a compromise on the part of the Romans, by leaving troops from Palmyra seemingly in charge though now incontrovertibly as part of the imperial apparatus.[32]

This admittedly conjectural situation in which the Palmyrenes had become the major power broker on the Middle Euphrates in the course of the second century AD may even have had a precedent. In 2013, Peter Edwell drew attention to the lack of clarity in our sources for the early stages of the so-called Parthian phase at Dura-Europos.[33] He warned that "a monolithic periodisation of Dura's history obscures the complex nature of events throughout the first century BC" and that this "ignores the role of regional powers".[34] According to Edwell, the dominant power in the first half of the first century BC was actually Tigranes of Armenia: if it

[30] I owe this suggestion to Leonardo Gregoratti. For the notion, cf. A. de Jong, 'Hatra and the Parthian commonwealth', in L. Dirven (ed.), *Hatra. Politics, Culture and Religion between Parthia and Rome* [*Oriens et Occidens* 21] (Stuttgart, 2013) 143-160, esp. 153-155, at 153, who used the term "to locate those cultures that were within the orbit of the Parthian Empire, but were not inhabited mainly or chiefly by Parthians or other Iranians." In his article, De Jong argued, at 143, "that it is historically misleading to think of Hatra as a city 'between Rome and Parthia'", and one could claim the same (at least with regard to culture) for Palmyra. Cf. L. Gregoratti, *Between Ctesiphon and Rome: Royal Authority and Peripheral Powers along the Trade Routes of the Parthian Kingdom* [*Oriens et Occidens*] (Stuttgart, forthcoming).

[31] D.L. Kennedy, 'The *Cohors XX Palmyrenorum* at Dura-Europos', in E. Dąbrowa (ed.), *The Roman and Byzantine Army in the East. Proceedings of a Colloqium* [sic] *held at the Jagiellonian University, Kraków in September 1992* (Cracow, 1994) 89-98.

[32] Note that T. Gnoli, 'Some considerations about the Roman military presence along the Euphrates and the Ḫābūr', *Mediterraneo Antico* 10 (2007) 71-84, at 79, proposed "a variety [of] units from Palmyra" ordered by Rome to defend the Euphrates and its tributary. Cf. below, n.98.

[33] P.M. Edwell, 'The Euphrates as a boundary between Rome and Parthia in the late republic and early empire', *Antichthon* 47 (2013) 191-206.

[34] Ibid., 196 and 195, respectively.

had been the Arsacids themselves who had put him on his throne at the end of the second century BC, his rise to prominence at the beginning of the first century is said to have come "very much at the expense of Parthian power".[35] Concerning the age of Augustus, attention was drawn to a passage in Strabo that has often been discussed but only seldom in connection to Dura-Europos and its surroundings: 'The Euphrates and the land beyond it constitute the boundary of the Parthian empire. But the parts on this side of the river are held by the Romans and the chieftains of Arabia as far as Babylonia, some of these chieftains preferring to give ear to the Parthians and others to the Romans, to whom they are neighbours.'[36] It is certainly imaginable that, as Edwell suggested, leading figures from Palmyra (interestingly a city never mentioned as such by Strabo) were amongst those chieftains, although it remains impossible to prove it.[37] It seems no coincidence that shortly after the attestation of the earliest dated inscription from Palmyra itself (a honorific statue base set up by the priests of Bel in 44 BC[38]), the earliest dated one from Dura-Europos is in fact an inscription in Palmyrenean Aramaic recording how Palmyrene migrants had built a temple to their deities Bel and Yarhibol outside the city walls in 33 BC,[39] with the construction of other Palmyrene temples in the small town following suit. Edwell argued that "it is not until the end of the first century AD that any convincing evidence for Parthian control of Dura in some form emerges", and that during at least part of the earlier period that has traditionally been associated by scholars with 'Parthian Dura', namely the years between the mid-80s and Crassus' defeat at Carrhae-Harran in 53, the Arsacids cannot have been as dominant in the Middle Euphrates region as they were in other periods of their history.[40] Could it have been the Palmyrenes who acted as power brokers at

[35] Ibid. 195. Cf. ibid. 205.

[36] Strabo, *Geogr.* 16.1.28: ὅριον δ᾽ ἐστὶ τῆς Παρθυαίων ἀρχῆς ὁ Εὐφράτης καὶ ἡ περαία: τὰ δ᾽ ἐντὸς ἔχουσι Ῥωμαῖοι καὶ τῶν Ἀράβων οἱ φύλαρχοι μέχρι Βαβυλωνίας, οἱ μὲν μᾶλλον ἐκείνοις οἱ δὲ τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις προσέχοντες, οἷσπερ καὶ πλησιόχωροί εἰσιν. Cf. J.-B. Yon, 'Kings and princes at Palmyra', in T. Kaizer and M. Facella (eds.), *Kingdoms and Principalities in the Roman Near East* [*Oriens et Occidens* 19] (Stuttgart, 2010) 229-240, at 235 with n.30; U. Scharrer, 'The problem of nomadic allies in the Roman Near East', in ibid., 241-335, at 315. With regard to the ancient world in general, and the Roman Near in particular, one ought to talk about frontier zones rather than boundaries. Cf. Sommer, *Roms orientalische Steppengrenze*, passim.

[37] Edwell, 'The Euphrates as a boundary', 205.

[38] Hillers and Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*, no.1524 = J.F. Healey, *Aramaic Inscriptions & Documents of the Roman Period. Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions* IV (Oxford, 2009) 144-145, no.28.

[39] Hillers and Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*, no.1067 = R. Bertolino, *Corpus des inscriptions sémitiques de Doura-Europos* [Supplemento n.94 agli *ANNALI (Sez. Orientale)* 64] (Napels, 2004) 34-35, no.A.TN.01.

[40] Edwell, 'The Euphrates as a boundary', 205. Cf. ibid.: "The acceptance of 113 BC and the general dismissal of Tigranes' empire as ephemeral from the early 80s to the early 60s BC have masked the very complex situation on the middle Euphrates during much of the first half of the first century BC. For a large part of this period, Tigranes of Armenia was the dominant power, making his presence felt in the important cities of Syria and all

Dura around this time? Evidence from Dura-Europos itself to support this idea is of course lacking, but so is any clarity about the complexion and functioning of the oasis itself in the pre-Roman period. That there was at least some form of settlement at Tadmor-Palmyra from the early Hellenistic period onwards can no longer be doubted since the explorations by Andreas Schmidt-Colinet, but the multifaceted process through which this early community developed into the urban heart of the Syrian steppe as it appears in our sources from the first half of the first century AD onwards remains unexplained and a conclusive characterization of its local society in the pre-Roman period is unattainable.[41] We do therefore not know whether, prior to Pompey, Palmyra belonged to the remnants of the Seleucid empire,[42] or whether it ought to be classified (with Ernest Will, echoing Cumont's phrase) as a kind of independent 'merchant republic' in the earlier phases of its history.[43] The lack of evidence for any form of kingship, inconceivable as it may appear with regard to a site as isolated as Palmyra, led Jean-Baptiste Yon - emphasising "the predominance of leading families in the political life of the city" as perhaps the main feature in Palmyrene society throughout its later history - to suggest that one could think of the oasis in the period before the appearance of the new civic institutions in terms of "a client state without kings".[44]

Be that as it may, sources from elsewhere in the Near East and from later on certainly suggest the adeptness with which Palmyrenes managed to link up with local elites throughout the

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the way east to northern Mesopotamia and Iraq. This must have had implications for the question of which power could be said to control Dura, and it is most unlikely that it was the Parthians at this stage."

[41] For the investigation of the so-called 'Hellenistic city', an unfortunate label for the area south of the wall of Diocletian, cf. A. Schmidt-Colinet and W. al-As'ad (eds.), *Palmyras Reichtum durch weltweiten Handel. Archäologische Untersuchungen im Bereich der hellenistischen Stadt* I-II (Vienna, 2013), with T. Kaizer, 'On the origins of Palmyra and its trade', *JRA* 28 (2015) 881-888, esp. at 887-888.

[42] Note that belonging to the Seleucid empire did not necessarily mean the same in the first century BC as it would have done in earlier times.

[43] Thus Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos*, XXXII, and Will, 'Pline l'ancien et Palmyre', 268: "république de marchands".

[44] Yon, 'Kings and princes at Palmyra', 233 and 239. Cf. ibid.: "As happened sometimes with client kingdoms, one has the feeling that Palmyra had been put on a sort of 'waiting list', while a process of romanisation or hellenisation was taking place, before the city came to be fully integrated as a *polis* into the Roman empire." Or perhaps, rather than thinking in terms of a 'waiting list', it ought to be accentuated that the city had not yet fallen within Rome's geographical reach at the time. It can in any case be generally difficult, with regard to a city without a king, to decide whether it enjoyed 'client' status or had come to form part of a province. For what it is worth, it may be noted that Roman custom officials were active at Palmyra around the middle of the first century AD, though comparable evidence from Dura-Europos is lacking: *IGLS* XVII.1, no.400 (foundation of a tomb by C. Virius Alcimus and T. Statilius Hermes in AD 56/7) and *PAT* 0591 = *IGLS* XVII.1, no.536 (foundation of a tomb by L. Spedius Chrysanthus in AD 58). Cf. Millar, *The Roman Near East*, 324.

region,[45] and it is indeed a fact that the civic council and assembly of Palmyra were able to make decisions that could have direct bearing on non-Palmyrene territory.[46] As far as the epigraphic evidence from Dura-Europos is concerned, those belonging to the local family of Lysias (with traditional Macedonian names such as Seleukos and Lysanias, in addition to Lysias) occupied the leading magistracy at least up until AD 159,[47] with a fourth name appearing shortly after 165 in the person of the *epistatès* Aurelius Heliodoros.[48] It has been proposed that the latter "appartenait, sinon à une autre famille, du moins à une branche collatérale, peut-être rivale" - which would fit well with the idea that the new Roman overlords (according to the traditional view) worked together with a family (or a branch of the same family) with stronger pro-Roman sentiments.[49] But the onomastic evidence also matches the scenario sketched in this paper, which is based in a large part on Luther's suggestion: in either case Dura-Europos maintained its civic institutions, and the (new) office holders simply changed the authority to whom they pledged their loyalty (regardless of whether this now concerned Rome or Palmyra). A totally different approach to these issues was proposed by

[45] E.g. the Palmyrene Alexandros whom Germanicus sent to local dynasts in the Gulf, cf. Hillers and Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*, no.2754; a Palmyrene citizen who acted as satrap of Bahrein in the 130s on behalf of one of those dynasts (σατράπης Θιλουανων Μεερεδατου βασιλέως Σπασίνου Χάρακος), cf. Hillers and Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*, no.1374 = *IGLS* XVII.1, no.245; and another one who seems to have been honoured as chief magistrate of Mesene (ἄρχων Μαισηνων) at some point between the end of the first and the end of the second century AD, cf. *IGLS* XVII.1, no.160. For an investigation of this feature through Network Analysis and New Institutional Economics, cf. E.H. Seland, 'Ancient trading networks and New Institutional Economics: the case of Palmyra', in K. Droß-Krüpe, K. Ruffing and S. Föllinger (eds.), *Antike Wirtschaft und ihre kulturelle Prägung - The Cultural Shaping of the Ancient Economy* [*Philippika* 98] (Wiesbaden, 2016) 223-234.

[46] Cf. Hillers and Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*, no.1062, a bilingual inscription of AD 145/6 from Umm el-'Amad in the Palmyrena recording honours voted by the council and assembly for Soados, which included the setting up of statues at Spasinou Charax and at Vologesias. See now L. Gregoratti, 'The Palmyrene trade lords and the protection of the caravans', *Aram* 27 (2015) 139-148, at 143-145, for emphasis on the fact that, uniquely for Palmyrene inscriptions, Soados is recorded to have been entrusted with a specific position of power called *dynasteia* ([πάσα]ν ἐνχειρισθέντα δυναστείαν). On the term, see also Yon, *Les notables de Palmyre*, 106 n.55, 110. The model constructed by Gregoratti, of an individual who "gradually gained a prominent position and substantial personal power within the Palmyrene society" and whose undertakings simultaneously allowed him to "exercise strong territorial control", with civic institutions recognising his authority through "a term previously used in regards to those same lands ruled by the Arab chieftains", suits very well the hypothesis that I have postulated in this section.

[47] Cf. Gregoratti, 'Dura-Europos: a Greek town of the Parthian empire'.

[48] Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos*, 410 no.53.

[49] P. Leriche and E. el 'Ajji, 'Une nouvelle inscription dans la salle à gradins du temple d'Artémis à Doura-Europos', *CRAI* 143 (1999) 1309-1346, at 1327. Cf. ibid., 1325-1331 for further discussion and 1345-1346 for a list of known chief magistrates. But cf. M. Sartre, *The Middle East under Rome* (Cambridge, Mass. - London, 2005) 156: "apparently, from the first century B.C.E. up to the time of the Severi, [the *stratègos* and *epistatès* of the city] was always a member of the same family." The private residence of the leading magistrate, the largest house at Dura-Europos, occupied a complete block of the gridiron plan near the so-called *stratègeion*, cf. S. de Pontbriand, 'La résidence de Lysias à Europos-Doura. Une première approche', in P. Leriche, G. Coqueugniot and S. de Pontbriand (eds.), *Europos-Doura. Varia* I [*BAH* 198] (Beirut, 2012) 77-92.

Nigel Pollard, who raised the possibility that the leading magistrates of late Parthian and Roman Dura were not descendants of the original settlers of the colony Europos, but that they formed instead "a real and distinctive ethnic group that employed a myth of common descent and formulaic, recurring names as marks of cultural identity."[50] But it should not be forgotten that Heliodoros is also a fairly common name in Palmyra.[51] Could it, then, be the case that the Heliodoros who appears as the main office holder at Dura-Europos in the aftermath of Verus' Parthian war was actually a Palmyrene? And that the *epistatai* with Roman citizenship were all Palmyrenes who appear in the sources only with their Greek names, Palmyrenes who themselves joined this 'myth'? But this is of course real speculation, and it probably makes more sense to think of local Durenes maintaining the (nominally) leading positions in their own town.[52]

Any link between the ruling families and the Palmyrenes must, again, remain completely conjectural. But it is not implausible, and the absence of sources for any such association could be explained by imagining underhand payments (for which one could simply not expect evidence to exist!) that allowed Lysias' (and Heliodoros') lineage to continue to provide the main office holders in Dura-Europos but that otherwise gave a free hand to representatives of the oasis. As regards the ability of Palmyra to sustain a military force of its own, it should be added that this is due not only to the city's location in splendid isolation, but also to its peculiar internal social set-up.[53] If clear-cut answers remain out of reach, admitting this lack of clarity in

[50] N. Pollard, 'Colonial and cultural identities in Parthian and Roman Dura-Europos', in R. Alston and S.N.C. Lieu (eds.), *Aspects of the Roman East. Papers in Honour of Professor Fergus Millar FBA* I [*Studia Antiqua Australiensia* 3] (Turnhout, 2007) 81-102, at 99.

[51] Cf. J.K. Stark, *Personal Names in Palmyrene Inscriptions* (Oxford, 1971) 15 s.v. HLDRS, HLYDWRS, HLYDYRS and HLYDRWS; *IGLS* XVII.1, 432 s.v. Ἡλιόδωρος.

[52] Cf. the warning by M. Sartre, 'The ambiguous name: the limitations of cultural identity in Graeco-Roman Syrian onomastics', in E. Matthews (ed.), *Old and New Worlds in Greek Onomastics* [*Proceedings of the British Academy* 148] (Oxford, 2007) 199-232, at 232 = 'Le nom ambigu: les limites de l'identité culturelle dans l'onomastique de la Syrie gréco-romaine', in M. Sartre, *L'historien et ses territoires. Choix d'articles*, ed. P. Brun [*Scripta Antiqua* 70] (Paris, 2014) 85-101, at 101: "Choosing a name is governed by motivations so complex that they can never be ascertained in any individual case."

[53] Cf. M. Sommer, 'Les notables de Palmyre - local elites in the Syrian desert in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD', in P. Briks (ed.), *Elites in the Ancient World* [*Szczecińskie Studia nad Starożytnością* 2] (Szczecin, 2015) 173-182, at 181-182, who has strongly argued that the Palmyrene elite should be viewed as a "military aristocracy" different from the typical Graeco-Roman *Honoratioren*: "Palmyra's ruling class was a functional elite based on military expertise", and id., 'The Venice of the sands: Palmyrene trade revisited', in J.C. Meyer, E.H. Seland and N. Anfinset (eds.), *Palmyrena: City, Hinterland and Caravan Trade between Orient and Occident* (Oxford, 2016) 11-17. For different accents, cf. N. Andrade, 'Inscribing the citizen: Soados and the civic context of Palmyra', *Maarav: a Journal for the Study of the Northwest Semitic Languages and Literatures* 19 (2012) 65-90, at 67, who argued that the leading citizens of Palmyra "practiced and reconstituted Greek *politeia*, even if

our sources at least has the benefit of allowing to put forward the working hypothesis that at two points in the history of Dura-Europos (in the first century BC and in the second century AD) Palmyrenes could have taken advantage of a situation in which dominance over the Middle Euphrates region was up for grabs and in this manner created precedents for the well-documented episode in Palmyra's history of the rise of first Odaenathus and then his widow Zenobia when the oasis city became the prevailing force in the wider region.[54]

Dura-Europos: a typical small town?

The historian Ammianus Marcellinus, a late fourth-century eye-witness to the marches of both the emperor Julian to the East and his successor Jovian back westwards, provides a priceless record when he states how 'after marching for two days we approached the deserted town of Dura, which lies on the river bank.'[55] It has been commonly accepted that this deserted state had started following the town's immediate abandonment after its capture by the Sasanians, but recently Jen Baird has argued that Dura may have been abandoned as a civic settlement but continued to experience what she called "more ephemeral occupations".[56] Of those responsible for an intermittent occupation, however, only a recluse who lived during the reign of Constantine has made it into our historical records: according to the Syriac *Acts of Mar Ma'in*, during the persecution of Christians under Shapur II the hermit Benjamin lived 'in a ruined city called Dura'.[57] Otherwise the ruins, over time covered by the desert sands, remained untouched until their discovery in the modern era.

Before the recent IS-sanctioned ransacking by means of illegal soundings did irreparable

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their version of *politeia* defied many classical Greek standards and the norms of many Greco-Roman cities."

[54] On this later chapter in Palmyra's history, and particularly its Euphrates context, cf. M. Gawlikowski, 'Palmyra on the Euphrates', *Mediterraneo Antico* 10 (2007) 129-136.

[55] Amm. Marc. 24.1.5: *emenso itaque itinere bidui, prope civitatem venimus Duram desertam, marginibus amnis impositam*; cf. 23.5.8, where the historian records how Julian was on his way *ad Duram, desertum oppidum*.

[56] J.A. Baird, ''*Dura deserta*: the death and afterlife of Dura-Europos', in N. Christie and A. Augenti (eds.), Vrbes Extinctae. *Archaeologies of Abandoned Classical Towns* (Farham, 2012) 307-329, at 320. Cf. ibid.: "there is evidence for limited intermittent occupation at the site for centuries afterwards, as might be expected at a site which contained substantial re-usable building material in a defensible position adjacent to agricultural land and the Euphrates." Cf. ead., *The Inner Lives of Ancient Houses*, 271.

[57] S.P. Brock, *The History of the Holy Mar Ma'in. With a Guide to the Persian Martyr Acts. Persian Martyr Acts in Syriac: Text and Translation* 1 (Piscataway, NJ, 2009), §6: *bmdynt' ḥd' ḥrbt' dmtqry' dwr'*. Cf. ibid., §43: 'The blessed man replied, "… … His name is Benjamin, and he is living in the desert of Dura, where he has performed numerous miracles"' (*ṭwbnʾ dyn ʾmr lh … … ʾytwhy dyn šmh bnymyn. wʾytwhy ʿwmrh bmdbrʾ ddwrʾ.*

damage to the site, a combination of Dura's particular archaeological history and what was referred to by Cumont as "des conditions climatériques exceptionnelles" had assured the brilliant preservation of its monuments and documents for posterity.[58] Several features make Dura-Europos into one of our best sources for day-to-day life in a small town situated in the periphery of the Roman world: the combined discoveries of inscriptions and graffiti in at least ten ancient languages;[59] sculptures and frescoes which uniquely combine elements of Classical and Oriental art;[60] the most important papyrological dossier of any military unit in the Roman world;[61] documents relating to the local economy;[62] and above all nearly twenty pagan sanctuaries (including a mithraeum),[63] plus the famously painted synagogue and the earliest Christian house church, most of them set in a rigorously grid-iron city plan and surrounded by well-preserved fortifications. If Mikhaïl Rostovtzeff's famous nickname of the site 'Pompeii of the Syrian desert' has recently been referred to as "useful for publicity purposes" but otherwise "profoundly misleading",[64] it is still fair to say that, like Pompeii, the relevance of Dura-Europos for modern scholarship far outdoes the town's actual importance in the ancient world. Or, to cite Millar, the evidence from Dura has given the town "from the perspective of the

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ʾynʾ dḥylʾ rwrbʾ ʿbd bhw mdbrʾ), with Brock's introduction at p.5-6 and notes at p.62.

[58] The quotation is from Cumont, 'Rapport sur une mission à Sâlihîyeh sur l'Euphrate', 36. Notably some of the best-preserved decoration was found in buildings located on the street bordering the western city wall, such as the synagogue, the house church and the mithraeum. The Roman defenders against the Sasanian siege had initially strengthened the embankment by filling the so-called 'Wall Street', then constructed artificial slopes both on the outside of the wall and inside the houses and temples that bordered on the street, and finally demolished those parts of these buildings that were still exposed in order to create a rampart that could be accessed without problems from within the town. For an image of the cross-section of the western wall and adjacent buildings, cf. S. James, *The Arms and Armour and other Military Equipment. Excavations at Dura-Europos 1928-1937, Final Report* VII (London, 2004) 31 fig.9.

[59] T. Kaizer, 'Religion and language in Dura-Europos', in H.M. Cotton e.a. (eds.), *From Hellenism to Islam. Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East* (Cambridge, 2009) 235-253.

[60] Cf. L. Dirven, 'The problem with Parthian art at Dura', in T. Kaizer (ed.), *Religion, Society and Culture at Dura-Europos* [*Yale Classical Studies* 38] (Cambridge, 2016) 68-88.

[61] R.O. Fink, *Roman Military Records on Papyrus* [*American Philological Association*, Monograph 26] (Cleveland, 1971). Note that in what follows the Durene documents are referred to (as *P. Dura*) by their standard numbering following the *Final Report*.

[62] K. Ruffing, 'Preise und Wertangaben aus Dura Europos und Umgebung', *Laverna* 13 (2002) 24-44; id., 'Dura Europos: a city on the Euphrates and her economic importance in the Roman era', in M. Sartre (ed.), *Productions et échanges dans la Syrie grecque et romaine, Topoi* Suppl. 8 (Lyon, 2007) 399-411; id. 'Dura-Europos und seine Rolle im Fernhandel der römischen Kaiserzeit', in R. Rollinger e.a. (eds.), *Interkulturalität in der Alten Welt. Vorderasien, Hellas, Ägypten und die vielfältigen Ebenen des Kontakts* (Wiesbaden, 2010) 151-160; id., 'Economic life in Roman Dura-Europos', in T. Kaizer (ed.), *Religion, Society and Culture at Dura-Europos* [*Yale Classical Studies* 38] (Cambridge, 2016) 190-198.

[63] Nineteen according to the latest calculation, cf. P. Leriche, 'Recent discoveries concerning religious life in Europos-Dura', in M.K. Heyn and A.I. Steinsapir (eds.), *Icon, Cult, and Context: Sacred Spaces and Objects in the Classical World* [*UCLA Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press Monographs* 82] (Los Angeles, 2016) 153-190. For a study of the variety of deities worshipped in the small town, cf. M.-E. Duchâteau, *Les divinités d'Europos-Doura. Personnalité et identité (~301 av. n.è - 256 de n.è.)* (Paris, 2013).

Roman empire … almost too great an importance."[65] Dura's marvellous findings have certainly facilitated the study of life in an ancient provincial small town to a degree that archaeology and history do not usually allow. I had previously expressed the sentiment that Dura is "potentially our best case study for social and religious life in a normal Near Eastern small town under the early and high empire",[66] but was called to task by Simon Price in his stimulating posthumous article on 'Religious mobility in the Roman empire'.[67] He challenged us "to raise the question of how typical Dura was, and so how far, and in what ways, we can generalize from it" and he put forward the view that "in some respects, Dura should perhaps be seen as more comparable to Mediterranean port towns, like Puteoli or Ostia, than to ordinary small towns in the Roman East."[68] In fact, David Kennedy (in his significant review article on Millar's *The Roman Near East*) had already argued that Dura-Europos was "hardly typical of cities of the Roman Near East", a statement that was followed by a question: "But perhaps there was no such thing as a typical city of the Roman Near East?"[69]

The 'world of villages' along the Middle Euphrates

One label that is in any case no longer considered applicable to Dura-Europos is that of 'caravan city', a term which was coined by Rostovtzeff in 1932 and applied to Dura and three other cities in the region (Palmyra, Petra and Jerash).[70] Instead, scholars nowadays emphasise, rightly, the relative fertility of Dura's hinterland. Or to quote Price, "Dura certainly had a significant local economy of its own."[71] In addition it is now commonly acknowledged that the town functioned as some sort of regional centre for a number of minor settlements along the Euphrates; in other words, that Dura-Europos was the focal point for a nearby 'world of villages'. I have borrowed

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[64] Thus Baird, *The Inner Lives of Ancient Houses*, 26.
[65] Millar, *The Roman Near East*, p.438.
[66] Kaizer, 'Religion and language in Dura-Europos', 235.
[67] S. Price, 'Religious mobility in the Roman Empire', *JRS* 102 (2012) 1-19, at 13.
[68] Ibid., 14-5.
[69] D. Kennedy, 'Greek, Roman and native cultures in the Roman Near East', in J.H. Humphrey (ed.), *The Roman and Byzantine Near East II: Some Recent Archaeological Research* [*JRA* Suppl. 31] (Portsmouth, RI, 1999) 76-106, at 88.
[70] M. Rostovtzeff, *Caravan Cities* (Oxford, 1932), with the classic review by D. Schlumberger, *Gnomon* 11.2 (1935) 82-96. Cf. F. Millar, 'Caravan cities: the Roman Near East and long-distance trade by land', in M. Austin, J. Harries and C. Smith (eds.), *Modus Operandi: Essays in Honour of Geoffrey Rickman* [*Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, Suppl.71] (London, 1998) 119-137, reprinted in id., *The Greek World, the Jews and the East. Rome, the Greek World and the East* III, eds. H.M. Cotton and G.M. Rogers (Chapel Hill, 2006) 275-299.
[71] Price, 'Religious mobility in the Roman Empire', 15.

the latter phrase from Millar's *The Roman Near East,*[72] though I am aware of Kennedy's warning that "until we have far more evidence from intensive surveys, we cannot speak knowledgeably about settlement patterns" and that "the 'world of villages' may in fact have been peculiar to specific places and/or times."[73] In 1923 Cumont gave a memorable description of the region, observing an atmosphere of continuity along the river: "Dans l'antiquité et plus tard au moyen âge, cette large plaine devait nourrir une population assez dense, mais l'irrigation y était alors comme aujourd'hui la condition de toute fécondité."[74] The agricultural and even more horticultural potential of the area is already clear from the oldest parchment found at Dura, from the second century BC, recording a sale subject to redemption of lands 'together with fruit trees and farm buildings and orchards' (ἀκροδρύοις καὶ ἐποικίωι καὶ παραδείσοις).[75] At the end of the second century AD, the emperor Septimius Severus is said (by Cassius Dio) to have used the tree plantations along the Euphrates to his advantage: 'he constructed boats on the Euphrates and proceeded forward partly by sailing and partly by marching along the river. The boats thus built were exceedingly swift and speedy and well constructed, for the forest along the Euphrates and that region in general afforded him an abundant supply of timber.'[76] Durene papyri and graffiti from the Roman period provide multiple insights into, and illustrations of, the

[72] Millar, *The Roman Near East*, where the phrase appears a total number of nine times (though not actually with regard to the Middle Euphrates zone around Salihiyah): 228, 250, 292, 301, 377, 379, 383, 390, 454. On 'villages' in the Middle Euphrates zone, cf. ibid. 129, 449, 482, and cf. ibid. 449: "Dura as a focal point in a long line of villages stretching along the Euphrates." Cf. K. Butcher, *Roman Syria and the Near East* (London, 2003) 138: "the importance of the village in Roman Syria and the Near East cannot be over-emphasized." This is of course an element that is unfortunately not very well visible on the map of the region in R.J.A. Talbert (ed.), *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World* (Princeton, 2000) map 91. Literary sources are contradictory: whereas Pliny (*HN* 6.117) states with regard to Mesopotamia that the Macedonians had gathered in cities a population previously 'scattered in villages' (*vicatim dispersa*), Philostratus (*V A* 1.20.2) would still describe the same region as containing 'some cities but mostly villages' (ἐν ᾗ καὶ πόλεις μέν, τὸ δὲ πλεῖστον κῶμαι).

[73] Kennedy, 'Greek, Roman and native cultures in the Roman Near East', 99.

[74] F. Cumont, 'Les fouilles de Ṣâliḥîyeh sur l'Euphrate', *Syria* 4 (1923) 38-58, at 39-41; slightly adapted in id., *Fouilles de Doura-Europos*, XII-XIV; cf. translation of passage in Hopkins, *The Discovery of Dura-Europos*, 12-13: "In antiquity and in the Middle Ages, the wide plain must have supported an extensive population, but irrigation, then as now, was the essential element."

[75] First published by F. Cumont, 'Le plus ancien parchemin grec', *Revue de Philologie, de Littérature et d'Histoire anciennes* 48 (1924) 97-111, esp. 103 for the quotation below; id., *Fouilles*, 286-296; cf. *P. Dura* 15. In his commentary on this document Cumont observed that the immediate surroundings of Salihiyah had clearly undergone a real transformation in this regard: "Même dans la vallée de l'Euphrate, on n'y trouve plus aucune ferme, aucun jardin ni verger, ni même aucun arbre, à moins qu'on ne veuille donner ce nom aux pauvres tamaris qui bordent le fleuve."

[76] Dio 75.9 : τῆς παρὰ τὸν Εὐφράτην ὕλης καὶ τῶν ἐκεῖσε χωρίων ἄφθονον διδούσης αὐτῷ τὴν τῶν ξύλων χορηγίαν. Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos*, XXI-XXII and 203, assumed that the temple of Artemis must have owned γῆ ἱερα, distinct from the town's own territory and administered by its priests, as he claimed was the case elsewhere in the Near East. Cf. B. Dignas, *Economy of the Sacred in Hellenistic and Roman Asia Minor* (Oxford, 2002) 74-84 and 156-167, for a discussion of Baetocaece as the only Syrian counterpart to the much better documented land-owning sanctuaries in Asia Minor.

fecundity of the 'world of villages' along the Middle Euphrates, of which it is only necessary to give a few examples. A registry roll of copies of around AD 180 includes information on the relinquishing of lots on which vines were growing in the village of Tetyrus in settlement of a loan.[77] From the same year comes a deed of sale, by a citizen of Europos who at the time was a resident in the village Nabagath of the hyparchy around Gabalein, concerning a transaction of the half-share belonging to the seller of a vineyard which is in epiphyteutic lands (i.e. held by the tenure of hereditary leasehold), near the same village Nabagath.[78] Graffiti from the House of Nebuchelos show how this local entrepreneur arranged for a consignment of wine to be bought for the local market but also in part to be shipped further to a village called Banabela, and there are multiple references to the production of barley in Dura's direct hinterland.[79] Further information is provided by the archives of *cohors XX Palmyrenorum*. Food provisions for the cohort (*frumentationes*) are the subject of a letter dated to AD 216,[80] and five years later a military directive instructs the supply of barley from the imperial domain (*ex praedis fiscalibus*) to cavalrymen (and muleteers) who are in the detachment at Appadana.[81] Another papyrus, dated to December 225, is a receipt of money for the purchase of barley by soldiers of *cohors XX Palmyrenorum*.[82] A preserved morning report of the cohort, from around 233, also includes references to soldiers procuring barley.[83] Finally, two documents show how granaries are guarded by soldiers.[84] Food provisions must have had a serious effect on the surrounding area, as there were quite some military mouths to feed:[85] after all, Dura-Europos did not act solely as the headquarters of *cohors XX Palmyrenorum*, but the town also hosted *cohors II Ulpia equitata sagittariorum*, and for varying periods of time vexillations of different legions were stationed at the Euphrates stronghold as well: we know of detachments of *Legio IIII Scythica* (who had their headquarters at Zeugma from Vespasian onwards), of *Legio XVI Flavia Firma* (based at

[77] *P. Dura* 17A.
[78] *P. Dura* 25.
[79] P.V.C. Baur, M.I. Rostovtzeff and A.R. Bellinger (eds.), *The Excavations at Dura-Europos, conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Preliminary Report of Fourth Season of Work, October 1930 - March 1931* (New Haven, 1933) no.245 on wine for Dura and Banabe; no.200, 204, 213, 258, 264 on barley. Cf. K. Ruffing, 'Die Geschäfte des Aurelios Nebuchelos', *Laverna* 11 (2000) 71-105.
[80] *P. Dura* 61.
[81] *P. Dura* 64.
[82] *P. Dura* 129.
[83] *P. Dura* 82. This document also makes mention of soldiers being dispatched to a place called Atha, and refers to the site of Bechufrayn (probably Kifrin, see below).
[84] *P. Dura* 106 and 108, with an assignment *oreo frumenti*.
[85] Cf. P. Kehne, 'War- and peacetime logistics: supplying imperial armies in East and West', in P. Erdkamp (ed.), *A Companion to the Roman Army* [*Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World*] (Malden, MA - Oxford, 2007) 323-338.

Samosata since Trajan's Parthian war), and of some others, such as *III Cyrenaica* and *X Fretensis*.[86] But soldiers could not live on grapes, barley and grain alone, and we also have evidence for large amounts of sacrificial animals to be slaughtered with regular intervals in the camp through the so-called *Feriale Duranum*, the only seemingly military ritual calendar preserved, dated to the early years of the reign of Alexander Severus, which lists a series of festivals to be observed in the course of the year and which stipulates adherence to the worship of Roman state gods and deified emperors:[87] the frequent supply of oxen and bulls needed to come from somewhere. On a much smaller scale, a graffito from a house apparently occupied by soldiers records the sacrifice of sheep in order to provide materials for a feast.[88] Documentation from Dura-Europos furthermore illustrates how specific legal matters could be conducted in otherwise unknown villages such as Paliga (which is said to be in the subdistrict about Iardas) and Ossa,[89] and reveals the levels of integration of the military element in the surrounding villages. A deed of sale, dated to May 227, records how a veteran of *cohors III Augusta Thracum*, now living in Raquqeta, bought land (bordering on the Khabur river, in a spot known as Qarqapta) from a villager living in Sachare-da-hawarae, which the latter had bought from a fellow villager.[90]

For a long time now, a second dossier of papyri and parchments has come to join those from Dura-Europos. In 1988 Denis Feissel and Jean Gascou were handed over for study nineteen documents (two in Syriac and the rest in Greek) by a private collector who had acquired them 'on the antiquities market'. Feissel and Gascou swiftly presented the Greek material in preliminary fashion to the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* in Paris in 1989, and

[86] Cf. James, *The Arms and Armour*, 16-20.

[87] R.O. Fink, A.S. Hoey and W.F. Snyder, 'The *Feriale Duranum*' [*Yale Classical Studies* 7] (1940) 1-221; Welles, Fink and Gilliam, *The Parchments and Papyri*, 191-212, no.54; Fink, *Roman Military Records on Papyrus*, no.117. For some recent studies, cf. A. Groslambert, 'Les dieux romains traditionnels dans le calendrier de Doura-Europos', in C. Wolff, with Y. Le Bohec (ed.), *L'armée romaine et la religion sous le Haut-Empire romain. Actes du quatrième congrès de Lyon organise les 26-28 octobre 2006 par l'Université Lyon 3* (Paris, 2009) 271-292; F. Lozano, 'El culto a los emperadores en el ejército romano: el caso del *Feriale Duranum*', in id., P. Giménez de Aragón and C. Alarcón (eds.), *Reyes y dioses: la realeza divina en las sociedades antiguas* [*ARYS: Antigüedad, Religiones y Sociedades* 12] (2014) 213-237. For an alternative interpretation of the calendar, cf. M.B. Reeves, *The 'Feriale Duranum', Roman Military Religion, and Dura-Europos: a Reassessment* (PhD State University of New York at Buffalo, 2004).

[88] M.I. Rostovtzeff e.a. (eds.), *The Excavations at Dura-Europos, conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Preliminary Report of Sixth Season of Work, October 1932 - March 1933* (New Haven, 1936) 40, no.621.

[89] *P. Dura* 20 and 23, concerning the arrangement of loans which allow for the use and occupation of the pledged property, in lieu of interest on the loan (so-called antichretic loans).

[90] *P. Dura* 26.

Javier Teixidor did the same with the Syriac texts one year later.[91] Their final publication took place in three instalments in the *Journal des Savants*, between 1995 and 2000.[92] The precise finding spot has never been revealed, but the materials were immediately hailed as the 'Middle Euphrates archive', and that is how they have been known ever since.[93] Like the documentation on papyrus and skin from Dura-Europos, the new materials opened a window onto the region's 'world of villages'. In *The Roman Near East*, Millar was the first to jump at the priceless information newly provided on the sub-region's administration and the role played by the military in local society. Gascou acknowledged in an article published in 1999: "Avant même notre première publication de cinq petitions grecques l'an dernier (P. Euphr. 1-5), Fergus Millar a souligné l'intérêt historique unique des 21 nouveaux documents grecs et syriaques du Moyen Euphrate".[94] According to Millar,[95] "we can now at least glimpse the economic and social integration of the soldiers into local society." He stated further that the documentation was "shedding a vivid light both on the structure of Roman government in the region and on the limits of its effectiveness." And he added that, "in political terms … the new archive, with its dated documents, provides conclusive evidence that in the middle of the third century all of Mesopotamia, from Marcopolis eastwards to Carrhae and Nisibis, was in Roman hands. Like

[91] D. Feissel and J. Gascou, 'Documents d'archives romains inédits du Moyen Euphrate (III^e siècle après J.-C.)', *CRAI* 133 (1989) 535-561; J. Teixidor, 'Deux documents syriaques du III^e siècle après J.-C., provenant du Moyen Euphrate', *CRAI* 134 (1990) 144-166. Cf. id., 'Les derniers rois d'Édesse d'après deux nouveaux documents syriaques', *ZPE* 76 (1989) 219-222.

[92] D. Feissel and J. Gascou, 'Documents d'archives romains inédits du Moyen Euphrate (III^e s. après J.-C.)', *Journal des Savants* (1995) 65-119; (1997) 3-57 [with J. Teixidor]; (2000) 157-208. Note that in what follows the Middle Euphrates documents are referred to (as *P. Euphr.*) by their standard numbering following this final publication (note that some scholars opt for the abbreviation *P. Mesop.* instead).

[93] For subsequent discussion, cf. T. Gnoli, *Roma, Edessa e Palmira nel iii sec. d.C.: problemi istituzionali. Uno studio sui papiri dell'Eufrate* (Pisa, 2000); M. Mazza, 'Processi di interazione culturale nel Medio Eufrate: considerazioni sulle *Papyri Euphratenses*', *Mediterraneo Antico* 10 (2007) 49-69; L. Migliardi Zingale, 'Diritto romano e diritti locali nei documenti del Vicino Oriente', *Studia et Documenta Historiae et Iuris* 65 (1999) 217-231; B.H. Stolte, 'The impact of Roman law in Egypt and the Near East in the third century AD: the documentary evidence. Some considerations in the margin of the Euphrates papyri (*P. Euphr.*)', in L. de Blois (ed.), *Administration, Prosopography, and Appointment Policies in the Roman Empire. Proceedings of the First Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire (Roman Empire, 27 BC - AD 406)* [*Impact of Empire* 1] (Amsterdam, 2001) 167-179. On the Syriac documents only, cf. S. Brock, 'Some new Syriac documents from the third century AD', *Aram* 3 (1991) 259-267; H.J.W. Drijvers and J.F. Healey, *The Old Syriac Inscriptions of Edessa and Osrhoene. Texts, Translations & Commentary* [*Handbuch der Orientalistik* 42] (Leiden, 1999) 237-248; J.F. Healey, 'Some lexical and legal notes on a Syriac loan transfer of 240 CE', in G. Kiraz (ed.), *Malphono w-Rabo d-Malphone: Studies in Honor of Sebastian P. Brock* [*Gorgias Eastern Christian Studies* 3] (Piscataway, NJ, 2008) 211-226 = id., *Law and Religion between Petra and Edessa. Studies in Aramaic Epigraphy on the Roman Frontier* [*Variorum Collected Studies Series*] (Farnham, 2011) ch.XVI.

[94] J. Gascou, 'Unités administratives locales et fonctionnaires romains. Les données des nouveaux papyrus du Moyen Euphrate et d'Arabie', in W. Eck, with E. Müller-Luckner, (ed.), *Lokale Autonomie und römische Ordnungsmacht in den kaiserzeitlichen Provinzen vom 1. bis 3. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1999) 61-73, at 61.

[95] For the following four citations, cf. Millar, *The Roman Near East*, 130, 155, 481 and 129, respectively.

Palmyra, the whole region from the Euphrates to the Tigris was now 'Roman', 'Greek' and 'Syrian' at the same time." Millar also emphasised that "one contribution from the new documents is precisely to suggest regular connections between the zone of villages near the middle Euphrates, above and below its confluence with the Chabur, and the cities of Osrhoene and Mesopotamia: Edessa, Marcopolis, Nisibis, Carrhae, Singara." This is of course precisely where they seem to be most different from the materials known from Dura-Europos. Although place names such as Appadana, Magdala and Birtha appear in both dossiers, and although there is a well-known Syriac text found at Dura-Europos which was produced in Edessa, the thematic overlap between the two sets of documents notwithstanding[96] there are certain geographical differences between them. In a way, if academic conventions were not so notoriously hard to break and if the alternative did not sound so awkward, the so-called 'Middle Euphrates archive' would better be called the 'Middle Euphrates around the confluence with the Khabur archive', in order to distinguish between the zones covered.[97]

Palmyrene soldiers on the Middle Euphrates

A Middle Euphrates papyrus (thus sticking to the traditional label), dated to 21 April AD 241, concerns a debt settlement agreed at Appadana (certainly situated to the north of Dura-Europos) between a soldier of a *numerus* of Palmyrenes and someone from the village of Dusarios.[98] Similarly, small detachments of *cohors XX Palmyrenorum* which were sent out to Magdala and Birtha found themselves north of their headquarters.[99] But - despite the fact that the location of military stations such as 'Castellum Arabum' and 'Chafer Avira' remains unknown - the main Palmyrene units seem to have been situated to the south of Dura-Europos. A letter written around 208 by the provincial governor Marius Maximus, in which he ordered his procurator to arrange that five military stations were to treat a Parthian envoy 'with the customary hospitality'

[96] Cf. ibid., 131, on how the Middle Euphrates documents reveal "the role of military units and individual soldiers as it were from below, from within local society", whereas "the military archives proper from Dura of course give a different impression." But cf. ibid., 130, on how the two archives "can combine to give a real impression of the military presence."

[97] For a detailed examination of the impact of the imperial army on the local societies of the region, cf. N. Pollard, *Soldiers, Cities, and Civilians in Roman Syria* (Ann Arbor, 2000).

[98] *P. Euphr.* 14. Note that Gnoli, 'Some considerations about the Roman military presence along the Euphrates and the Ḫābūr', 77-79, argued that one ought to "distinguish the *numerus Palmyrenorum* as a completely different unit in respect to the *cohors XX Palmyrenorum*."

[99] For some discussion, cf. A. Luther, 'Römische Militärposten der Severerzeit am Unteren Ḫābūr', *Göttinger Forum für Altertumswissenschaft* 5 (2002) 1-9.

(*secundum morem xenia*), makes clear that at least two of those, Eddana and Biblada, were located south of the town.[100] The problem is that there were more, as we know through excavations, from papyri found at Dura-Europos, and also from inscriptions from Palmyra itself - although the various sources do not overlap very much. To start with the Palmyrenean inscriptions, a statue was set up in the temple of Baal-Shamin at Palmyra, probably in the third century AD, for a certain Zabda son of Maqqai, by riders in the corps or 'wing' of Gamla and Ana (*pršy' b'br['] dy gml' w'n'*).[101] A commanding officer of that unit, the *stratègos* of Ana and Gamla, and his lieutenant (*'ṣṭrṭg 'l 'n' wgml' wḥlpth*) jointly dedicated a relief of Palmyrene deities in 225 in the steppe outside Palmyra.[102] Already in AD 132, i.e. well before the zone around Dura-Europos became Roman, two altars at Palmyra were being dedicated to Shai'-al-Qaum, 'the good and rewarding god who does not drink wine', by someone who identified himself as 'a Nabataean of the Rawwaha, who has been a cavalry soldier at Hirta and in the camp of Ana' (*nbṭy' rwḥy' dy hw' prš bḥyrt' wbmšryt' dy 'n'*).[103] As far as the papyri from Dura-Europos are concerned, two well-preserved rosters of *cohors XX Palmyrenorum*, both dating from around 220, list which soldiers were stationed where, and in both cases the two main postings are Appadana (to the north of the town) and a place called Bechufrayn (where the highest ranking centurion was sent to).[104] The latter site is also mentioned in a letter written by a soldier in Antioch and addressed to his centurion at Dura, dating from the early third century. The soldier writes that he had gone with the army to Bechufrayn and then stayed there for a while with his family.[105] Both Ana (or Anath) and (most likely) Bechufrayn are known also

[100] *P. Dura* 60B. Cf. Welles, Fink and Gilliam, *The Parchments and Papyri*, 223: "The officers addressed commanded auxiliary units or in the case of the praepositi, possibly also legionary vexillations. Presumably they were stationed in the towns named at the bottom of the letter. These are listed in the order in which the courier would reach them going down the river."

[101] Hillers and Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*, no.0200.

[102] Hillers and Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*, no.2757. For the relief, cf. H.J.W. Drijvers, *The Religion of Palmyra* [*Iconography of Religions* XV, 15] (Leiden, 1976) pl.IX.2 = K. Tanabe, *Sculptures of Palmyra* I [*Memoirs of the Ancient Orient Museum, Tokyo* 1] (Tokyo, 1986) pl.103-105.

[103] Hillers and Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*, no.0319. It is interesting to compare this with the similar terminology in a Safaitic inscription (from northeastern Jordan), cf. M.C.A. Macdonald, 'Nomads and the Ḥawrān in the late Hellenistic and Roman periods: a reassessment of the epigraphic evidence', *Syria* 70 (1993) 303-413, at 374: *l'qrb bn 'bgr bms[1]rt 'l 'mrt frs[1]* ('by X son of Y, a horseman in the unit of the tribe Z'). On the comparison, cf. id., ''Romans go home'? Rome and other 'outsiders' as viewed from the Syro-Arabian desert', in J.H.F. Dijkstra and G. Fisher (eds), *Inside and Out. Interactions between Rome and the Peoples on the Arabian and Egyptian Frontiers in Late Antiquity* [*Late Antique History and Religion* 8] (Leuven - Paris - Walpole, Mass., 2014) 145-163, at 157-158. Note that ibid., 158 n.68, proposed to interpret *'n'* as a personal name instead. On the peculiar way in which the deity is described, cf. P. Alpass, *The Religious Life of Nabataea* [*RGRW* 175] (Leiden - Boston, 2013) 232.

[104] *P. Dura* 100 and 101.

[105] *P. Dura* 46.

through archaeology. The latter seems certainly to be identified with the settlement of Kifrin, where ruins on the citadel (including a bath complex) seem to have been built, according to Antonio Invernizzi, "as the main seat of the riverine High Command on the occasion of an extension of the Euphrates *limes* below Dura Europos".[106] Since there is no site in the list of stations provided by Isidorus of Charax with which Kifrin could be identified, the ruins - on a precipice looking out over the cultivated stretch of land bordering on the Euphrates and dominating the river's bend in the direction of Ana - are unlikely to have originated before the first half of the first century AD.[107] The ruins are said to have shared their cultural environment with Dura-Europos, and the excavators recorded the finds of some letters scratched on sherds in an Aramaic script that appears to be similar to the local dialect of Hatra.[108] A much smaller military post has also been found three miles further south of Kifrin, on the little Euphrates island of Bijan, a fortress with a small harbour secured by breakwater. Although it is plausible that the site (as Bet Izan) can be identified with the Ἴζαν νησόπολις ('Izan the island city') mentioned by Isidorus,[109] it was home to a military unit probably only from the first half of the third century AD. Palmyrenean Aramaic is attested on pottery sherds, and the excavators have argued that the lamps found on Bijan were imported from Dura-Europos.[110] Further north from Kifrin and Bijan, at about two-third of the distance between Dura and Kifrin, lies Ana (or Anath), which is likewise mentioned in Isidorus' list of stations, and it is with this place that one of the most evocative sources for religious life in Dura-Europos can be connected.[111]

Deities from the Middle Euphrates region at Dura-Europos

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[106] A. Invernizzi, 'Kifrin and the Euphrates *limes*', in P. Freeman and D. Kennedy (eds.), *The Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East* [*BAR* 297(i)] (Oxford, 1986) 357-381, at 357. On the name Bechufrayn, cf. id., 'Kifrin-Βηχχουφρείν', *Mesopotamia* 21 (1986) 53-84, at 60; esp. F.A. Pennacchietti, '«il posto dei cipri»', *Mesopotamia* 21 (1986) 85-95.

[107] Cf. Invernizzi, 'Kifrin and the Euphrates *limes*', 362.

[108] Id., 'Researches in Kifrin: "Al-Qadissiya Dam Project"', *Sumer* 42 (1985) 22-26. For the sherds with Aramaic, cf. id., 'Kifrin and the Euphrates *limes*', 367.

[109] Isid. Char. *Mans. Parth.* 1. Cf. above, n.5.

[110] M. Gawlikowski, 'Bijan in the Euphrates', *Sumer* 42 (1985) 15-21; M. Krogulska, 'Bijan - lamps from the «Roman» layer', *Mesopotamia* 22 (1987) 91-100.

[111] Isid. Char. *Mans. Parth.* 1: εἶτα ᾽Αναθὼ νῆσος κατὰ τὸν Εὐφράτην σταδίων δ, ἐν ἧι πόλις, σχοῖνοι δ (*'Then Anatho, an island in the Euphrates four stadia across, on which is a city, four schoinoi'*). Cf. above, n.5. Cf. A. Northedge, A. Bamber and M. Roaf, with contributions by various others, *Excavations at 'Ānа, Qal'a Island. Iraq Archaeological Reports* 1 (Warminster, 1988), esp.6-8 on the Graeco-Roman sources that mention the site (by D. Kennedy and A. Northedge). For a helpful map showing the location of these three sites in relation to each other and to Dura-Europos, cf. Butcher, *Roman Syria and the Near East*, 56 fig.16. For

From a temple in the southwest corner of Dura-Europos comes an inscribed relief of a deity in Hellenistic cuirass, standing on top of two griffons, with a priestly figure burning incense in front of him.[112] The accompanying inscription records how 'Hadadiabos son of Zabdibolos son of Sillos set up this image from the sanctuary of the god named Aphlad, of Anath, the village on the Euphrates, as a vow, for his own salvation and that of his children and of his whole house', leaving of course no doubt that the cult of Aphlad at Dura-Europos had its origin in the Euphrates village of Anath.[113] Discussion of the relief and its inscription has often circled around the question of cult participation and religious exclusivity, and I have stated elsewhere that I consider it implausible that such meticulous description would have been aimed solely at villagers from Anath.[114] The fact that the indigenous divine name is spelt differently in the three Greek inscriptions from the sanctuary that record it (Ἀφλαδ, Ἀπαλαδῶι and Ἀφαλαδον) further shows that it originated in a different language (Akkadian *aplu*, 'son' and Adda, meaning 'son of Hadad'). A deity Du'anat, literally 'the one from Anath' (*d'nt*), known from Palmyrene documents, is often thought to be identical with the Aphlad known from the Durene relief.[115] At Palmyra, Du'anat is commonly associated with Shadrafa, both on a tessera and on

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discussion, cf. ibid., 55-58.

[112] M.-E. Duchâteau, 'Aphlad, dieu singulier et méconnu à Europos-Doura', in P. Leriche, G. Coqueugniot and S. De Pontbriand (eds.), *Europos-Doura. Varia* I [*BAH* 198] (Beirut, 2012) 201-214; ead. *Les divinités d'Europos-Doura*, 324-347. Cf. T. Kaizer, 'Patterns of worship in Dura-Europos: a case study of religious life in the Classical Levant outside the main cult centres', in C. Bonnet, V. Pirenne-Delforge and D. Praet (eds.), *Les religions orientales dans le monde grec et romain: cent ans après Cumont (1906-2006). Bilan historique et historiographique. Colloque de Rome, 16-18 Novembre 2006* (Brussels - Rome, 2009) 153-172, at 162-163. On the term used in the inscription (ἀφείδρυσις) and its implication that the image set up in the temple of Aphlad at Dura-Europos was a precise copy of the original cult statue at Anath, cf. L. Robert, *Hellenica. Recueil d'épigraphie, de numismatique et d'antiquités grecques* XIII (Paris, 1965) 120 with n.4 and 124 n.4, who argued that the use of this particular Greek word made the sanctuary a "filiale" or a "succursale".

[113] M.I. Rostovtzeff (ed.), *The Excavations at Dura-Europos, conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Preliminary Report of Fifth Season of Work, October 1931 - March 19*32 (New Haven, 1934) 112-113, no.416: Τὴν ἀφείδρυσιν ταύτην ἱεροῦ Ἀφλαδ λεγομένου θεοῦ τῆς Ἀναθ κώμης Εὐφράτου ἀνέθηκεν Ἀδαδιαβος Ζαβδιβωλου τοῦ Σιλλοι εὐχὴν ὑπὲρ τῆς σωτηρίας αὐτοῦ καὶ τέκνων καὶ τοῦ πάντος οἴκου. For the relief, cf. S.B. Downey, *The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Final Report* III, part I, fascicle 2. *The Stone and Plaster Sculpture* [*Monumenta Archaeologica* 5] (Los Angeles, 1977) 193-194 with pl.I.1.

[114] Thus Kaizer, 'Patterns of worship in Dura-Europos', at 162-163; contra Dirven, 'Strangers and sojourners: the religious behavior of Palmyrenes and other foreigners in Dura-Europos', in L.R. Brody and G.L. Hoffman (eds.), *Dura-Europos. Crossroads of Antiquity* (Chestnut Hill, Mass., 2011) 201-220, at 217 n.15: "the stress on the god's origin functions as an identity marker for the group from Anath. This formulation is well known in the Roman Near East and it does not follow from this that people from other places worshipped the god as well." Her point about identity marker is in principle a valid one, but would the villagers themselves really have needed to be told that Anath was 'a village on the Euphrates'?

[115] E.g. Duchâteau, *Les divinités d'Europos-Doura*, 324. Cf. Downey, *The Excavations at Dura-Europos. The Stone and Plaster Sculpture*, 193.

two inscriptions.[116] One of the inscriptions accompanies a relief found in the temple of Baal-Shamin at Palmyra, of which only the bottom part is preserved.[117] The Palmyrenean inscription simply dedicates this to Shadrafa and Du'anat, and the relief depicts the two deities on one side of the altar, with the dedicant on the other side in an act of sacrifice. One of the deities, in a long dress, stands on a pedestal. Between the two stands a little shaft around which a snake is circling, moving towards the deity on the left (not on a pedestal) who is also wearing a long robe. From other reliefs it is clear that the snake is the particular animal of Shadrafa, and it seems therefore likely that the figure on the pedestal is meant to represent Du'anat. As far as we can tell from what is left of the relief, he looks very different from Aphlad, whose image in Dura, after all, was supposed to be an exact copy of his original cult statue in Anath (according to the use of the term ἀφείδρυσις). If this is accepted as a convincing argument to nullify the often proposed straightforward identification between 'the son of Hadad' and 'the one from Anath', it would still mean that some Palmyrenes had come to worship a deity explicitly originating from a little Euphrates stronghold which in later times still served as a station for a Palmyrene unit. Another deity from the same Anath received worship in her own temple at Dura-Europos: the goddess Azzanathkona, whose name (Ἀζζαναθκονα) seems to combine the Semitic root for 'power' with a mention of the village. The divine name is already attested as divine recipient of the building in the thirties of the first century AD, but by the sixties of the second century she had become identified with the Greek goddess Artemis (who also had her 'own' temple in Dura). A relief, not accompanied by any inscription but doubtless depicting the indigenous goddess, shows her image seated between two bulls and crowned by a worshipper while a ritual attendant approaches in the background with a sacrificial animal.[118] There is one more item from Dura-Europos, much less known, which also links a deity with the world of villages around the town. A silver libation bowl found in one of the houses, dated to AD 232/3, is dedicated 'to Zeus Theos who is in Adatha' (Διὶ Θεῶ τῶ ἐν Ἀδαθα).[119] The dedicant, who in this case also identifies *himself* explicitly as a non-Durene ('of Adatha, dwelling in Bethzena', ἀπὸ Ἀδαθα οἰκῶν ἐν Βηθζηνα), thus makes sure to distinguish his deity from

[116] T. Kaizer, *The Religious Life of Palmyra* [*Oriens et Occidens* 4] (Stuttgart, 2002) 98-99.
[117] C. Dunant and R.A. Stucky, *Le sanctuaire de Baalshamîn à Palmyre* IV. *Skulpturen / Sculptures* [*Bibliotheca Helvetica Romana* 10.4] (Rome, 2000) 87, no.11 with Taf.6.11. For the inscription, cf. Hillers and Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*, no.0206.
[118] Cf. Duchâteau, *Les divinités d'Europos-Doura*, 303-323. For the relief, cf. Downey, *The Excavations at Dura-Europos. The Stone and Plaster Sculpture*, 185-187 with pl.II.
[119] Rostovtzeff (ed.), *The Excavations at Dura-Europos. Preliminary Report of Fifth Season of Work*, 307-310, no.610 with fig.13. Cf. Baird, *The Inner Lives of Ancient Houses*, 284.

the *other* 'Zeus the god' who is known to have had his own temple at Dura-Europos.[120]

Palmyrenes and Dura-Europos

Regular commercial connections between Palmyra and the Gulf region, reaching their zenith around the middle of the second century AD, are uncontroversial.[121] But the place of Dura-Europos within this network of long-distance trade is less straightforward, and the traditional view of Cumont - that the Palmyrenes who were based at Dura-Europos were directly engaged in the caravan trade of luxury products - has in recent years come under scrutiny.[122] Michał Gawlikowski drew attention to the fact that the Euphrates would have been navigable upstream only as far as Hit, which must have affected the caravans on their way back home from the Gulf, but he also argued that the river route would have been used for as long as possible for reasons of cost, time, comfort and especially security.[123] With that in mind, it is possible that Palmyrene merchants leaving the oasis took the Euphrates route via Dura-Europos, whereas those returning would have been obliged to leave the river at Hit and go from there to Palmyra through a long desert stretch. Lucinda Dirven therefore proposed a scenario in which caravans leaving Palmyra had a different character from those returning to the oasis, with outgoing merchants departing empty-handed and buying the necessary produce on their way to the Gulf and further eastwards.[124] While the merchants would board their ships to sail down the river, their camels trod back to Palmyra packed with items bought at Dura's markets in order to supplement the produce from the Palmyrena as it is known from the tax law.[125]

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[120] For the temple 'of Zeus Theos', cf. M.I. Rostovtzeff, F.E. Brown and C.B. Welles (eds.), *The Excavations at Dura-Europos, conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Preliminary Report of the Seventh and Eighth Seasons of Work, 1933-1934 and 1934-1935* (New Haven, 1939) 180-217. For the cult, cf. Duchâteau, *Les divinités d'Europos-Doura*, 113-122.

[121] Gawlikowski, 'Palmyra as a trading centre'.

[122] Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos*, esp. XXXVIII-XLI.

[123] M. Gawlikowski, 'Le commerce de Palmyre sur terre et sur eau', in J.-F. Salles (ed.), *L'Arabie et ses mers bordières. I. Itinéraires et voisinages* (Lyon, 1988) 163-172, at 169. Cf. id., 'Palmyre et l'Euphrate'. With regard to Isidorus' *Parthian Stations*, Roller has noted in his online commentary in *Brill's New Jacoby* (781) that "from Doura the route continues down the Euphrates to Seleukeia, 108 *schoinoi* away. There is a greater interest in the characteristics of the river, especially its islands, perhaps indicating that travel below Doura was by water."

[124] L. Dirven, 'The nature of the trade between Palmyra and Dura-Europos', *Aram* 8 (1996) 39-54; ead., *The Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos*, 34-40.

[125] The classic study remains J. Matthews, 'The tax law of Palmyra: evidence for economic history in a city of the Roman East', *JRS* 74 (1984) 157-180. Cf. now also I.S. Shifman, *The Palmyrene Tax Tariff*, translated by S. Khobnya and edited by J.F. Healey [*JSS* Suppl. 33] (Oxford, 2014). An alternative scenario, not mutually exclusive (although in that case additional empty camels would have needed to travel to Hit), has the unloaded

Jørgen Christian Meyer and Eivind Heldaas Seland have now put forward a convincing reconstruction of the most likely trade route from Palmyra to the Gulf, indeed via Hit, by exploring the fortified structures along the route that had been noticed by the pioneers of aerial survey in the field of Near Eastern archaeology in the 1920s and 1930s, Père Antoine Poidebard and Sir Aurel Stein,[126] but also by investigating available cisterns, wells and springs, considering particularities of the relevant landscape, and by asking questions related to cost-path analysis.[127] If the Norwegian team is correct to assume that the main trade route between Palmyra and the Gulf went directly via Hit, and hence that Dura-Europos was not even an important point for Palmyrene merchants to embark on the river-part of their travel, this would in fact fit very well with an interpretation of the Palmyrene presence at Dura-Europos as a form of Palmyrene imperialism. In this context it is interesting to note that - long before the discovery of Dura-Europos - Theodor Mommsen had already commented upon Palmyra's key position halfway to the Gulf.[128] But taking Dura-Europos out of the equation concerning Palmyra's long-distance trade still leaves the small town at the end of the shortest route from the oasis to the Euphrates, and as such as an important place with a view to Palmyra's need for agricultural and horticultural produce (which in itself is very appropriate in the context of 'Palmyrene

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camels going from Dura-Europos southwards along the river to Hit, where they picked up the incoming merchants. Cf. M. Gawlikowski, 'The Roman frontier on the Euphrates', *Mesopotamia* 22 (1987) 77-80, at 79-80. For a recent study of how agriculture could have been handled in Palmyrene territory, cf. J. Hoffmann-Salz, 'The local economy of Palmyra - organizing agriculture in an oasis environment', in P. Erdkamp, K. Verboven and A. Zuiderhoek (eds.), *Ownership and Exploitation of Land and Natural Resources in the Roman World* [*Oxford Studies on the Roman Economy*] (Oxford, 2015) 234-248.

[126] Cf. D. Kennedy and D. Riley, *Rome's Desert Frontier from the Air* (London, 1990), with 67, fig.15 for Poidebard's photograph of the alleged Roman road from Palmyra to Hit.

[127] Cf. J.C. Meyer and E.H. Seland, 'Palmyra and the trade route to the Euphrates', *Aram* 28 (2016) 497-523. For some other important recent studies of the Palmyrene long-distance trade, cf. E.H. Seland, 'The organisation of the Palmyrene caravan trade', *Ancient West and East* 13 (2014) 197-211; id., 'Palmyrene long-distance trade: land, river, and maritime routes in the first three centuries CE', in M.N. Walter and J.P. Ito-Adler (eds.), *The Silk Road: Interwoven History, vol.1. Long-Distance trade, Culture, and Society* (Cambridge, 2015) 101-131; id., *Ships of the Desert and Ships of the Sea*; M. Gawlikowski, 'Trade across frontiers: foreign relations of a caravan city', in J.C. Meyer, E.H. Seland and N. Anfinset (eds.), *Palmyrena: City, Hinterland and Caravan Trade between Orient and Occident* (Oxford, 2016) 19-28. For some considerations of the origins of Palmyra's trade network and its connotation with the city's urban development, cf. Kaizer, 'On the origins of Palmyra and its trade'.

[128] In the fifth volume of his *Römische Geschichte* of 1885 (published one year later in English translation as *The Provinces of the Roman Empire. From Caesar to Diocletian*). The link with the Persian Gulf is made more explicit in the student notes of his lectures that were published in more recent times, cf. T. Mommsen, *Römische Kaisergeschichte. Nach den Vorlesungs-Mitschriften von Sebastian und Paul Hensel 1882/86*, eds. B. Demandt and A. Demandt (Munich, 1992) 401: "auch um nach dem persischen Meerbusen und den euphratischen Städten zu gelangen, muß man über Palmyra gehen."

imperialism').[129] Similarly, the smaller Palmyrene fortresses along the river to the south of Dura-Europos (but to the north of Hit) - which were interpreted by Rostovtzeff as "aus den Arabern der Wüste rekrutierte lokale Miliz", but by Cumont as "*fondouqs*, guarded by Palmyrene archers and serving as posting-houses for the mounted troops that escorted the caravans[130] - can easily be explained in the context of 'Palmyrene imperialism' without necessarily having to be connected with caravan trade. The ever-adaptable Palmyrenes would have spotted a good opportunity to enhance their position of strength along the Middle Euphrates, while evidence simultaneously shows their capacity to deal with the presence of the more mighty superpowers during other periods. An inscription from the late first century AD, in fact the only Latin-Palmyrenean bilingual inscription preserved from Palmyra itself and dating to a time that Dura-Europos was still under Parthian control, records the setting up of a statue of a centurion who was in charge of the river bank upstream and downstream (*curator ripae superioris et inferioris*),[131] thus throwing light on the varying ways in which the Palmyrenes interacted with the imperial presence in the area.[132]

In any case, at Dura-Europos itself, Palmyrenes had long been present. As we have seen, what is in fact the earliest dated inscription from the Euphrates small town, from 33 BC, records the dedication in Palmyrenean Aramaic of a temple to Bel and Yarhibol. It is one of at least half a dozen shrines and sanctuaries that can be connected with Palmyrene expatriates in the town.[133] Of these 'Palmyrene' temples at Dura, it is typical of scholarship that the little shrine in which

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[129] Note that Luther, 'Dura-Europos zwischen Palmyra und den Parthern', 328 n.5, emphasised also a direct connection between Palmyra and the confluence of the Habur and the Euphrates near Phaliga and Nabagata.

[130] M. Rostovtzeff, 'Das Mithraeum von Dura', *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Römische Abteilung* 49 (1934) 180-207, at 197; F. Cumont, 'Stations on the Euphrates', in S.A. Cook, F.E. Adcock and M.P. Charlesworth (eds.), *The Cambridge Ancient History* 11, *The Imperial Peace, AD 70-192* (Cambridge, 1936) 860. On the 'Palmyrene *militiae*', cf. A. Gebhardt, *Imperiale Politik und provinziale Entwicklung. Untersuchungen zum Verhältnis von Kaiser, Heer und Städten im Syrien der vorseverischen Zeit* [*Klio* Beihefte NF 4] (Berlin, 2002) 285-291. But cf. now Sommer, 'The Venice of the sands', 13; Seland, *Ships of the Desert and Ships of the Sea*, 69-70.

[131] Hillers and Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*, no.0308 = *IGLS* XVII.1, no.208. Cf. Yon, *Les notables de Palmyre*, 25, on the centurion: "qui avait dû avoir affaire aux Palmyréniens aux alentours de l'Euphrate."

[132] A later form of interaction would be Palmyrene dealings with the enigmatic *dux ripae*, 'commander of the river bank', who is attested in documentation from Dura-Europos including the military archives of *cohors XX Palmyrenorum*, and who is traditionally thought to have been the overall military commander of the Middle Euphrates region. For a critical reassessment of the position, cf. Edwell, *Between Rome and Persia*, 128-135; T. Gnoli, 'From *praepositus pretenturae* to *dux ripae*. The Roman 'grand strategy' on the Middle Euphrates (2nd - 3rd cent. AD)', in A.S. Lewin and P. Pellegrini, with the aid of Z.T. Fiema and S. Janniard (eds.), *The Late Roman Army in the Near East from Diocletian to the Arab Conquest* [*BAR International Series* 1717] (Oxford, 2007) 49-55, at 53-54.

[133] Dirven, *The Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos*, with an appendix containing all relevant sources at 196-334. Cf.

Baal-Shamin is worshipped is conventionally known - following a relief with a bilingual inscription that identifies him with Zeus Kyrios - only as the temple 'of Zeus Kyrios'. Whereas in Palmyra Baal-Shamin was the recipient of classical cella (built around the time of Hadrian's visit to the city, and situated in series of court-yards), in Dura-Europos he found himself worshipped in a rather minuscule setting.[134] The so-called temple 'of the Gadde' is misnamed after two side-reliefs of the Aramaic equivalents of the Tychai of Tadmor and of Dura, because the central relief is too much damaged to have its subject deity interpreted with any certainty. Whereas the Gad of Tadmor follows the standard iconography of a Greek city goddess (going back to the famous sculpture by Eutychides of the Tyche of Antioch), the Gad of Dura is male instead and according to his iconography could be identified with Zeus Olympios, which would fit well with the fact that on the relief he is crowned by Seleucus Nicator, who is identified as such in the Palmyrenean inscription.[135] However, this provides better information about Palmyrene interpretation of Durene religion than about Durene religion in its own right. A small room off the main road leading to the Palmyra gate has been labelled the 'temple of Bel' because of the find of a small relief, dated to AD 173/4, with an accompanying inscription in Palmyrenean which dedicates it to Bel. The relief, however, does not actually depict this god (a priest is holding two religious statues of the deities Allat and Arsu) and the room itself hardly merits the label of 'temple' anyway.[136] Another temple commonly known as that 'of Bel' is the sanctuary with which the story of Dura-Europos began with the discovery of the first frescoes in 1920 - a designation based on an oft-disputed interpretation of the fragmentary painting at the back wall of the *naos*. Baptised by Cumont as the temple 'of the Palmyrene gods' (a label that is only applicable in the temple's later phase - thanks mostly to the above-mentioned fresco of the

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ead., 'Strangers and sojourners'. The evidence is now also discussed by Smith, *Roman Palmyra*, 151-160.

[134] The argument by S.B. Downey, 'Cult reliefs at Dura-Europos: problems of interpretation and placement', *Damaszener Mitteilungen* 10 (1998) 201-210, at 204, and followed by Baird, *The Inner Lives of Ancient Houses*, 286, that thanks to its location high on the city wall the relief would have been a "visible beacon" elsewhere in the city, surely exaggerates the degree of visibility. Cf. Duchâteau, *Les divinités d'Europos-Doura*, 98-113.

[135] Dirven, *The Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos*, 111-122. Cf. Duchâteau, *Les divinités d'Europos-Doura*, 547-569.

[136] On the building and its multiple architectural phases, cf. P. Leriche and G. Coqueugniot, with S. de Pontbriand, 'New research by the French-Syrian archaeological expedition to Europos-Dura and new data on polytheistic sanctuaries in Europos-Dura', in J.Y. Chi and S. Heath (eds.), *Edge of Empires. Pagans, Jews, and Christians at Roman Dura-Europos* (New York - Princeton) 15-38, at 31-34. On the relief and the deities involved, cf. A. Bounni, 'Un nouveau bas-relief palmyrénien de Doura-Europos', *CRAI* (1994) 11-8; A. Rousselle, 'Le relief du fils de Shalman à Doura-Europos', in P. Leriche, M. Gelin and A. Dandrau (eds.), *Doura-Europos. Études* V 1994-1997 [*AURORHE* 2] (Paris, 2004) 131-151; Dirven, *The Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos*, 93 and 275-278; Kaizer, *The Religious Life of Palmyra*, 120. Cf. Duchâteau, *Les divinités d'Europos-Doura*, 364-368 and 426-429.

sacrifice by the tribune Julius Terentius and to another wall painting), Millar and Dirven simultaneously and independently argued that according to the epigraphy it should be referred to as the temple 'of Zeus'.[137] Finally, Palmyrene archers were behind the building of the original Mithraeum in AD 167, but this should of course not be labelled as a 'Palmyrene temple' as such and, in any case, by the beginning of the third century many soldiers from other units had become involved, with the *centurio princeps* in command of vexillations of *Legio IIII Scythica* and *XVI Flavia Firma* adding a new dedication when the mithraeum was enlarged to Sol Invictus Mithras.[138]

Language issues at Dura-Europos and Tadmor-Palmyra

The 'Palmyrene temples' at Dura are identifiable as such because of the worship of what scholars consider typically Palmyrene deities, by people carrying what are thought to be typically Palmyrene names, through dedications written in the Palmyrenean language. It is worth asking, however, whether 'Palmyrenean' is actually the correct label for the Aramaic inscriptions found at Dura. Of course, the link with the Palmyrene segment of Dura's population is sometimes made explicit (when a worshipper identifies himself as a 'Palmyrene' or 'Tadmorene', such as on a relief of Nemesis from the city gate at Dura-Europos dated to the middle of the third century[139]), but other cases are less clear-cut and may be too easily taken for

[137] Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos*, 29-41; Millar, 'Dura-Europos under Parthian rule', 482; Dirven, *The Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos*, 294-295. Cf. now T. Kaizer, 'Revisiting the "temple of Bêl" at Dura-Europos: a note on the fragmentary fresco from the naos', in M.K. Heyn and A.I. Steinsapir (eds.), *Icon, Cult, and Context: Sacred Spaces and Objects in the Classical World* [*UCLA Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press Monographs* 82] (Los Angeles, 2016), 35-46, making the case for the label 'temple of Bel'. Cf. Duchâteau, *Les divinités d'Europos-Doura*, 414-426.

[138] For the consecutive dedication and building inscriptions from the mithraeum, cf. Rostovtzeff, Brown and Welles (eds.), *The Excavations at Dura-Europos. Preliminary Report of the Seventh and Eighth Seasons of Work*, 83-89, no.845-847. For some important recent studies on the Durene mithraeum, cf. P. Leriche, 'Observations sur le mithraeum de Doura-Europos à la lumière des découvertes récentes', *Topoi* 11 (2001) 195-203; A. Mastrocinque, (2004), 'Il mitreo di Dura Europos', *Mediterraneo Antico* 7 (2004) 161-179; L. Dirven and M.M. McCarty, 'Local idioms and global meanings: Mithraism and Roman provincial art', in L.R. Brody and G.L. Hoffman (eds.), *Roman in the Provinces. Art on the Periphery of Empire* (Chestnut Hill, Mass., 2014) 125-141; L. Dirven, 'A new interpretation of the mounted hunters in the mithraeum of Dura-Europos', in M.K. Heyn and A.I. Steinsapir (eds.), *Icon, Cult, and Context. Sacred Spaces and Objects in the Classical World* [*UCLA Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press Monographs* 82] (Los Angeles, 2016) 17-33; T. Gnoli, 'The mithraeum of Dura-Europos: new perspectives', in T. Kaizer (ed.), *Religion, Society and Culture at Dura-Europos* [*Yale Classical Studies* 38] (Cambridge, 2016) 126-143.

[139] P.V.C. Baur and M.I. Rostovtzeff (eds.), *The Excavations at Dura-Europos, conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Preliminary Report of First Season of Work, Spring 1928* (New Haven, 1929) 62-64 with 66, pl.IV.1; Hillers and Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*, no.1078; Bertolino, *Corpus des inscriptions sémitiques de Doura-Europos*, 40-41, no.BA.F1.02.

granted. Perhaps the language and its script that are commonly viewed as being related to the Palmyrenes should, as far as the evidence from Dura-Europos is concerned, be re-thought one day as a more 'regional' dialect, in use not only by Palmyrenes but also by Durenes.[140] In a number of cases the Palmyrenean texts at Dura are accompanied by Greek counterparts, and Loren Stuckenbruck, who has compared this relatively small body of material with the much more substantial corpus of bilingual inscriptions from Palmyra itself, has shown that the linguistic patterns followed by the Palmyrenes at the Euphrates stronghold with regard to bilingualism are in rough lines similar to those at Palmyra itself.[141] This is an important point, because the language patterns of the two places in general are very different. Looking at the wider cultural picture and taking the political and administrative context into account, in the third century both Palmyra and the Euphrates zone were - as Millar emphasised more than once in *The Roman Near East* - simultaneously Greek, Roman and Oriental.[142] But when it comes to *civic* language, as again Millar has been instrumental in pointing out, at Dura-Europos "Greek remains standard",[143] whereas Palmyra was "the only publicly bilingual city in the Roman Near East".[144] There might have been some attempts in the first century AD at public *tri*lingualism (with Latin alongside Greek and Palmyrenean), but this never really got going - and in any case,

[140] Cf. J. Gascou, 'The diversity of languages in Dura-Europos', in J.Y. Chi and S. Heath (eds.), *Edge of Empires. Pagans, Jews, and Christians at Roman Dura-Europos* (New York - Princeton) 75-96, at 82: "It is conceivable that, subsequent to the arrival of the Palmyrene soldiers in Dura, their writing - imitated with greater or lesser skill - served as an occasional vehicle for local Aramaic expression." As regards the spoken and written language of the inhabitants from the villages along the Euphrates, Gascou argued that "the vernacular language of the region must have been Syriac", cf. ibid., 81. The seven Syriac inscriptions from Dura-Europos itself are listed by Bertolino, *Corpus des inscriptions sémitiques de Doura-Europos*, 54-58.

[141] L.T. Stuckenbruck, 'The bilingual Palmyrene-Greek inscriptions at Dura-Europos: a comparison with the bilinguals from Palmyra', in T. Kaizer (ed.), *Religion, Society and Culture at Dura-Europos* [*Yale Classical Studies* 38] (Cambridge, 2016) 177-189.

[142] Millar, *The Roman Near East*, 144: "third-century Palmyra was to be 'Oriental', 'Greek' and 'Roman' all at once." Cf. ibid., 481: "Like Palmyra, the whole region from the Euphrates to the Tigris was now 'Roman', 'Greek' and 'Syrian' at the same time." Cf. now the important study by N.J. Andrade, *Syrian Identity in the Greco-Roman World* (Cambridge, 2013) 343 and passim, arguing "how diverse performances of Greekness (with Syrianness and Romanness) were in antiquity".

[143] Ibid., 467.

[144] Ibid., 470. On Palmyrene bilingualism, cf. D.G.K. Taylor, 'Bilingualism and diglossia in late antique Syria and Mesopotamia', in J.N. Adams, M. Janse and S. Swain (eds.), *Bilingualism in Ancient Society. Language Contact and the Written Text* (Oxford, 2002) 298-331, at 317-324; J.N. Adams, *Bilingualism and the Latin Language* (Cambridge, 2003) 248-264; H. Gzella, 'Die Palmyrener in der griechisch-römischen Welt: kulturelle Begegnung im Spiegel des Sprachkontaktes', *Klio* 87 (2005) 445-458. Jeremy Hutton kindly informed me that he is co-authoring a short monograph on translation and bilingualism at Palmyra, a section of which has already been published as an article: J.M. Hutton and C.E. Bonesho, 'Interpreting translation techniques and material presentation in bilingual texts: initial methodological reflections', in J.M. Hutton and A.D. Rubin (eds.), *Epigraphy, Philology, and the Hebrew Bible. Methodological Perspectives on Philological and Comparative Study of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of Jo Ann Hackett* (Atlanta, 2015) 253-292. Hutton is currently directing the Wisconsin Palmyrene Aramaic Inscription Project, which performs Reflectance Transformation Imaging on

as highlighted once more by Millar, Latin basically disappeared from Palmyrene public life by the time the city had become a Roman *colonia*.[145] It is unfortunate that the debate on Palmyrene bilingualism seldom takes into account the city's coinage. I have claimed in an earlier paper that the only Palmyrene coinage that is inscribed at all is in fact bilingual.[146] A few coins which are believed to be from the second century (though Palmyrene coins are notoriously difficult, if not impossible, to date) have the name of the city in Greek (ΠΑΛΜΥΡΑ) on the obverse and, although it must remain a hypothesis, it is possible to recognise a *dalet* (Aramaic 'd' - or indeed a *resh*, Aramaic 'r', to which it is identical) on the reverse, which would allow us to read 'Tadmor', the indigenous Aramaic name of Palmyra. Not only does this fit splendidly with the bilingualism that is known from the city's public inscriptions, but furthermore it matches the commonly ignored countermarked coins from Palmyra which date from the first century AD: a capital *tau* (Aramaic 't' - for Tadmor) and a Greek Π (for Palmyra) appear alongside each other on both single- and double-stamped Palmyrene countermarks.[147] Although there is of course widespread acknowledgement in academic writing of the fact that Tadmor was Palmyra's indigenous name, scholars never really refer to the site by its double nomenclature. This is actually quite striking when compared to the scholarly convention to talk about 'Dura-Europos'.[148] It ought to be emphasised that the traditional way to refer to the two sites, as 'Palmyra' and 'Dura-Europos' respectively, presupposes a certain degree in variation of their

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Palmyrene inscriptions: https://uwdc.library.wisc.edu/collections/classicalstudies/wpaip/.

[145] F. Millar, 'Latin in the epigraphy of the Roman Near East', in H. Solin, O. Salomies and U.-M. Liertz (eds.), *Acta Colloquii Epigraphici Latini* (Helsinki, 1995) 403-419 = id., *The Greek World, the Jews and the East. Rome, the Greek World and the East* III, eds. H.M. Cotton and G.M. Rogers (Chapel Hill - London, 2006) 223-242. For an updated list and further discussion, cf. J.-B. Yon, 'Bilinguisme et trilinguisme à Palmyre', in F. Biville, J.-C. Decourt and G. Rougemount (eds.), *Bilinguisme gréco-latin et épigraphie* (Lyon, 2008) 195-211. In any case, there is no good evidence for the widespread sentiment, most recently expressed by T. Bryce, *Ancient Syria. A Three Thousand Year History* (Oxford, 2014) 280, that "Arabic was the most frequently heard language in the city's streets and thoroughfares."

[146] T. Kaizer, '"Palmyre, cité grecque"? A question of coinage', *Klio* 89 (2007) 39-60, at 52-53. Needless to say, this statement does relate only to the coinage issued by the city before the so-called 'kingdom of Zenobia'.

[147] Cf. ibid., 57-59. Kevin Butcher kindly informed me of four new Palmyrene countermarked coins from Assur that he is in the process of publishing, two *dupondii* with a Π only, and two *sestertii* with a bilingual stamp. These four coins, all again Neronian, are the first Palmyrene countermarks of which we know their provenance. Intriguingly, one of the two *sestertii* has the reflected image of the actual *tau* (on the other *sestertius* it is the right way round), which means either that the stamp used for this particular coin contained an error or (although it is of course impossible to say whether the Π is a reflected image or a correct one!) that the whole coin is retrograde, a practice common (as Kevin Butcher pointed out to me) for the *SC* on Hatrene and related coinages.

[148] Or, indeed, 'Europos-Doura', as the French-Syrian team now unnecessarily insists on calling it. E.g. Leriche and Coqueugniot, with De Pontbriand, 'New research by the French-Syrian archaeological expedition to Europos-Dura', 38 *. For a critique, cf. T. Kaizer, 'Introduction', in id. (ed.), *Religion, Society and Culture at Dura-Europos* [*Yale Classical Studies* 38] (Cambridge, 2016) 1-15, at 7-8. Cf. Baird, *The Inner Lives of Ancient Houses*, p.13-14.

trajectories from the outset, an inference that is subject to an incorrect methodological approach that arbitrarily gives primacy to the Greek element only in one of the two cases (the wrong case as it could be argued!). 'Dura-Europos' is a modern hybrid, sufficiently functional to accentuate that either half of the hyphenated nomenclature was used throughout the town's history, often alongside each other contemporaneously, both in the final years (when they appear in military and civic documents) and much earlier (as is clear from the relevant fragment of Isidorus of Charax) - although, as we have seen above, publicly (at least as regards inscriptions) the town was nearly completely Greek. Therefore, if only one of the two sites ought to be systematically referred to under both its Classical *and* native name, it should be Tadmor-Palmyra, where both place names also appear concurrently in civic documentation (including coinage) and whose dual place name was similarly commented upon by a literary source in the first century AD, in this case Josephus' *Antiquities*: 'And so, when [Solomon] had built this city and surrounded it with very strong walls, he named it Thadamora, as it is still called by the Syrians, while the Greeks call it Palmyra.'[149]

How much material from Dura-Europos and from Tadmor-Palmyra is lost, and has now probably been lost forever, cannot be known. Papyri fragments from Dura-Europos reveal that Appian, Herodotus and Demosthenes were read (and one damaged parchment whose contents could be viewed only with the help of an infra-red photograph has been interpreted as a wordlist to accompany the fourth book of Homer's *Iliad*),[150] but the rich harvest at Salihiyah notwithstanding there are no Palmyrenean papyri from the small town, save what seems to be,

[149] Joseph. *Ant.* 8.6.1 (154): ταύτην οὖν τὴν πόλιν οἰκοδομήσας καὶ τείχεσιν ὀχυρωτάτοις περιβαλὼν Θαδάμοραν ὠνόμασε καὶ τοῦτ' ἔτι νῦν καλεῖται παρὰ τοῖς Σύροις, οἱ δ' Ἕλληνες αὐτὴν προσαγορεύουσι Πάλμυραν. The argument is put forward in T. Kaizer, 'Trajectories of Hellenism at Tadmor-Palmyra and Dura-Europos', in B. Chrubasik and D. King (eds.), *Hellenism and the Local Communities of the Eastern Mediterranean, 400 BCE - 250 CE* (Oxford, forthcoming).

[150] C.B. Welles, 'Fragments of Herodotus and Appian from Dura', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 70 (1939) 203-212; T.F. Brunner, 'Two papyri of Appian from Dura-Europos', *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 25 (1984) 171-175; R.G. Babcock and W.A. Johnson, 'The Appian Papyrus from Dura-Europus (*P.Dura* 2)', *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 31 (1994) 85-88; G. Menci, 'PDura 7: Demosthenes, *In Aristocratem* (or. XXIII) 55', *ZPE* 167 (2008) 6-8; M. Gronewald, 'P. Dura 3: Glossar zu Homer, Ilias Δ?', in ZPE 44 (1981) 177-178. Note that the opening lines of the first two books of the *Aeneid* were scratched on a wall in the so-called Palace of the *Dux Ripae* and in a house in Block E4, respectively: M.I. Rostovtzeff e.a. (eds.), *The Excavations at Dura-Europos, conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Preliminary Report of the Ninth Season of Work, 1935 - 1936*. Part III: *The Palace of the* Dux Ripae *and the Dolicheneum* (New Haven, 1952) 55, no.960; Rostovtzeff e.a. (eds.), *Preliminary Report of Sixth Season of Work*, 48, no.628. On these Virgilian quotes, cf. J.A. Baird, 'The graffiti of Dura-Europos. A contextual approach', in ead. and C. Taylor (eds.), *Ancient Graffiti in Context* (New York - London) 49-68, at 59: "such texts need not be directly equated with a familiarity with such works,

firstly, one line of Palmyrenean as a subscription by a witness in an otherwise Greek document,[151] and, secondly, a parchment apparently in Palmyrenean which is so heavily damaged that any attempts to say anything sensible about it have thus far been in vain.[152] From Palmyra itself come about sixty papyrus fragments found by the Polish team in the so-called tomb 'of Kitot'.[153] Roger Bagnall has stated that "both Greek and Palmyrene appear" in these scraps,[154] but it must remain unclear whether this implies that the documentation was actually bilingual (no matter how plausible this would be). Since the papyri fragments used to be on display in the local museum of Palmyra, it is unfortunately now unlikely that they will ever be studied again.[155]

As Millar stated in *The Roman Near East*, "if Palmyrene could be written, as it was, it follows that both it and Greek must have been taught in the city. But there our evidence stops."[156] Or does it? There might, just, be one piece of unique evidence as far as the region is concerned, to throw light on "how people were educated at school level", which would imply that "those educated in Greek followed the normal pattern of Greek literary education."[157] It concerns a set of seven waxen tablets, published in 1893 and said to originate from Palmyra. I fear that it will never be possible for this claim to be substantiated, so I quote the opening lines of the original

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nor have a singular explanation for their prevalence."

[151] According to K. Beyer, *The Aramaic Language, its Distribution and Subdivisions* (Göttingen, 1986) 27, and J.F. Healey, 'The writing on the wall: law in Aramaic epigraphy', in P. Bienkowski, C. Mee and E. Slater (eds.), *Writing and Ancient Near Eastern Society: Papers in Honour of Alan R. Millard* [*Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies* 426] (New York - London, 2005) 127-141 at 130; reprinted in id., *Law and Religion between Petra and Edessa. Studies in Aramaic Epigraphy on the Roman Frontier* [*Variorum Collected Studies Series*] (Farnham, Surrey, 2011) ch.XIX. The papyrus is Welles, Fink and Gilliam, *The Parchments and Papyri*, no.27d. The Greek line that follows the apparent Palmyrenean then explains what was written in the Aramaic: the Palmyrenean reads *...] zbyd' w[qb]lt [d]mwh dnr' ḥmš [...* ('[I, someone son of] Zebida [have sold the property] and I have received the price of 5 denarii') and the Greek states ...] ὁ ἀποδόμενος ὑπέγραψεν [εὐδοκῶν κατὰ τὰ προγεγραμμένα] ('[so and so], the seller, has signed [in order to express his approval of the above transaction]').

[152] Welles, Fink and Gilliam, *The Parchments and Papyri*, no.152; Hillers and Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*, no.1656, where it was announced that a new edition is in preparation by E. Cussini. Cf. Yon, *Les notables de Palmyre*, 136, n.28. I am grateful to Eleonora Cussini for informing me that the ink on the document is now too faded to make any improvements to the reading and that she is no longer planning to republish it.

[153] H.M. Cotton, W.E.H. Cockle and F.G.B. Millar, 'The papyrology of the Roman Near East: a survey', *JRS* 85 (1995) 214-235, at 219, no.2: "hands suggest second-third century".

[154] R.S. Bagnall, *Everyday Writing in the Graeco-Roman East* (Berkeley - Los Angeles, 2011) 114.

[155] Michał Gawlikowski kindly confirmed to me that the papyri fragments from Palmyra are "insignificant scraps" and that "not a single word could be recognized" (pers. comm.). Cf. J. Gascou, 'The papyrology of the Near East', in R.S. Bagnall (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology* (Oxford, 2009) 473-493, at 476; Healey, *Law and Religion between Petra and Edessa*, 10 (addenda).

[156] Millar, *The Roman Near East*, 329.

[157] I am borrowing again the words of Millar himself, this time from his article 'Empire, community and culture

publication: "Some six months ago Mr. A.D. van Assendelft de Coningh presented the Leiden library with a set of seven waxen tablets, forming a small book. They were acquired at Palmyra in 1881 by his brother, Mr. H. van Assendelft de Coningh, officer in the Royal Dutch Navy. Mr H. van Assendelft de Coningh died soon after his return to his country; we know, however, that the tablets were found at Palmyra from a fragment of a letter which he wrote some days before his death. It runs as follows: 'During my brief visit to Palmyra I acquired these wooden tablets.' The tablets came into the possession of Mr. A.D. van Assendelft de Coningh and were put aside with other souvenirs of his brother's travels. They happened to be shown to me and I easily saw that they contained Greek writing. The tablets were then presented to the Leiden library, the principal librarian of which, Dr. W.N. du Rieu, gave them the name of *Tabulae ceratae graecae Assendelftianae*, in honour of the generous giver and his deceased brother."[158] The waxen tablets contain a selection of fables of Babrius, believed to have been a second-century AD author from Syria.[159] As is known from Quintilian (*Inst.* 1.9.1-3), the fable was viewed as a great instrument to teach pupils the rudiments of rhetorics, and the Palmyrene tablets would suggest that Babrius was already used as a school author by the third century.[160]

Only a very small proportion of funerary reliefs shows the deceased with writing materials such as *stylus*, *polyptych* or *schedula*, but such representations show in any case how literacy was valued in Palmyrene society.[161] One relief in particular, now in the Louvre, depicts Greek characters on the writing tablet held by a boy [PLATES I-II]. The letters are the final seven ones of the alphabet, but written in reverse order from omega to sigma, which has been explained as

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in the Roman Near East', 149.

[158] D.C. Hesseling, 'On waxen tablets with fables of Babrius (*Tabulae Ceratae Assendelftianae*)', *JHS* 13 (1893) 293-314, at 293.

[159] On the basis of a line in Fable 57 in which he claims to know 'Arabs' from his own (negative) experience: ἐντεῦθεν Ἄραβές εἰσιν, ὡς ἐπειράθην, ψεῦσταί τε καὶ γόητες, ὧν ἐπὶ γλώσσης οὐδὲν κάθηται ῥῆμα τῆς ἀληθείης ('as a result, Arabs are liars and charlatans, as I myself have learned from experience; there is not a word of truth that springs from their lips').

[160] Cf. Hesseling, 'On waxen tablets with fables of Babrius', 296, who points out a number of "peculiarities … which prove the tablets to be a schoolboy's book; such are the repetition in cursive of a fable ... and of an epimythium ...; hence too the verse of Hesiod on the inner sides of the covers, which probably was set down as a writing exercise."

[161] Cf. Ł. Sokołowski, 'Portraying the literacy of Palmyra: the evidence of funerary sculpture and its interpretation', *Études et Travaux* 27 (2014) 375-403. According to the database of the Palmyra Portrait Project of Aarhus University (http://projects.au.dk/palmyraportrait/) approximately 1% of the portraits holds a *stylus*. I am grateful to Rubina Raja for providing me with this information. Cf. A.J.M. Kropp and R. Raja, 'The Palmyra Portrait Project', *Syria* 91 (2014) 393-408. At a conference in Warsaw on 21-22 April 2016, Eleonora Cussini presented a paper on 'Palmyrene cursive and the question of everyday writing at Palmyra', which will be published in M. Gawlikowski, D. Wielgosz-Rondolino and M. Żuchowska (eds.), *Life in Palmyra, Life for*

a reflection of the importance of Semitic writing at Palmyra.[162] Scanty as this evidence may be, it is as good as it gets with regard to language teaching in the city.[163]

A typical small town and a distinctive city

To quote one last time from Millar's *The Roman Near East*: "by far the most significant evidence for the strength of Palmyrene local culture as a *popular* culture is the fact that its soldiers, alone of all 'nationalities' who contributed to the auxiliary forces of the Imperial army, might take their language and their art with them."[164] Because the Palmyrene community away from home was so distinctive it may of course have seemed more dominant in 'diaspora' contexts than it actually was, and from that perspective I am tempted to argue that the actual *impact* by the sizeable community of migrants from Palmyra *on the local character* of Dura-Europos has simply been overstated in scholarship - regardless of my earlier argument in favour of any so-called 'Palmyrene phase' in the town's history. That is not to say that the available evidence for contacts between Dura and Palmyra should be downplayed, but that those contacts had more bearing on this specific community of Palmyrene migrants than either on their hometown Palmyra or on their adopted residence Dura-Europos. Most of the relevant sources record how expatriates from Palmyra, both merchants and military personnel, paid homage at Dura-Europos to their own ancestral gods. Though at first glance their sanctuaries and shrines seem to dominate the religious map of the small-town, there is not much evidence to suggest that their cults made inroads into the actual civic patterns of worship of Dura-Europos.

Palmyra. Conference Dedicated to the Memory of Khaled al As'ad (Warsaw, forthcoming).

[162] Cf. J. Dentzer-Feydy and J. Teixidor, *Les antiquités de Palmyre au Musée du Louvre* (Paris, 1993) 228, no.221 (Louvre catalogue no.AO 18174): "on lit les dernières lettres de l'alphabet grec (…), écrites à la peinture et ordonnées dans le sens inverse de l'ordre grec, conformément à l'écriture sémitique, qui se lit de droite à gauche. Cette représentation est un témoignage concret de l'enseignement du grec à Palmyre." I wonder, however, whether the order of the letters has rather more to do with the position of the tablet in the boy's hand and its relation to the viewer. If the family wanted the relief to draw attention to the fact that the boy had been learning Greek, surely there was no need for emphasis on the contrasting way in which Aramaic was written. Since the image in the catalogue does not show the writing clearly I am adding my own photograph of the relief here. For a similar relief that does unfortunately not show any writing on the tablet, cf. Smith, *Roman Palmyra*, 103, fig.4.12. I am grateful to Andrew M. Smith II for sending me the original photograph of the image in his book, taken in the storage of the Palmyra Museum, for me to verify whether any writing was visible.

[163] More dubiously related to the notion is a graffito from the temple of Bel which has been interpreted as a commemoration of a teacher or a guide (*sbr'* / καθηγητής), cf. Hillers and Cussini, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*, no.1349 = *IGLS* XVII.1, no.38. Cf. J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling, *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions* II [*Handbuch der Orientalistik* 21] (Leiden - New York, Cologne, 1995) 775 s.v. sbr_2.

[164] Millar, *The Roman Near East*, 328.

Pierre Leriche has rightly stressed that the importance of the finds from Dura-Europos for our understanding of the history of the Near East in the Hellenistic, Parthian and Roman periods cannot be overestimated. As far as the study of the region is concerned, "il y a un avant Doura-Europos, et un après Doura-Europos."[165] But if we can look beyond the fact that the soil of Salihiyah was indeed, as Cumont referred to it, remarkably inexhaustible,[166] the finds themselves do not necessarily need to be considered very surprising (though what is surprising is how well they are preserved and how they combine to create an unprecedented window onto local society). The integration of soldiers into daily life (both in Dura and in the villages along the Euphrates), a vibrant local economy, the worship of Greek gods such as Artemis, of village gods such as Aphlad and Azzanathkona, of other indigenous deities such as Atargatis, and the presence of a mithraeum frequented by its military clientele; it all fits with patterns known from elsewhere in the ancient world. And as for the famous, more 'unique' monuments and documents? The Christian house church with its wall paintings might have no parallel in the preserved record of the Roman world before Decius, but surely there were similar buildings in the many towns and cities of the empire during the long centuries before christianity could finally become more visible.[167] The extraordinary decoration of the synagogue - illustrating the Hebrew scriptures in sharp contrast to the prescription of the Ten Commandments - must be viewed as evidence that Jewish communities living in the periphery of the Roman world and far away from their homeland had much more leeway in the way they gave expression to their religion than any notion of an orthodox Judaism would suggest.[168] And as regards the *Feriale Duranum*, legionary and

[165] P. Leriche, 'Rostovtzeff, Doura-Europos et les *Caravan Cities*', in J. Andreau and W. Berelowitch (eds.), *Michel Ivanovitch Rostovtzeff* (Bari, 2008) 191-204, at 204: "Et l'on ne peut que souligner ici l'importance de Doura-Europos pour l'histoire générale du Proche-Orient hellénistique, parthe et romain. Il y a un avant Doura-Europos, et un après Doura-Europos."

[166] F. Cumont, review of P.V.C. Baur and M.I. Rostovtzeff (eds.), *The Excavations at Dura-Europos. Preliminary Report of Second Season Work* [sic] *(1928-1929)* (New Haven, 1931), *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 11 (1932) 234-236, at 236: "le sol inépuisable de la vieille colonie macédonienne de l'Euphrate"; id., 'Rapport sur une mission archéologique à Doura-Europos', *CRAI* (1934) 90-111, at 90: "le sol inépuisable de la ville gréco-parthe et romaine".

[167] On the church, cf. e.g. U. Mell, *Christliche Hauskirche und Neues Testament. Die Ikonologie des Baptisteriums von Dura Europos und das Diatessaron Tatians* [*Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus* 77] (Göttingen, 2010); M. Peppard, *The world's Oldest Church. Bible, Art, and Ritual at Dura-Europos, Syria* [*Synkrisis*] (New Haven - London, 2016).

[168] The bibliography on the synagogue of Dura-Europos and its paintings is overwhelming, so I simply refer to a few recent relevant items: D. Noy, 'The Jews of Roman Syria: the synagogues of Dura-Europos and Apamea', in R. Alston and S. Lieu (eds.), *Aspects of the Roman East. Papers in Honour of Professor Fergus Millar FBA* I [*Studia Antiqua Australiensia* 3] (Turnhout, 2007) 62-80; S. Fine, 'Jewish identity at the *limus*. The earliest

auxiliary units spread all over the empire will have been guided by ritual calendars in their adherence to the formal devotion of the state cults, regardless of how much space the production of such documents left for local specification of a particularly popular *deus* or *divus*.[169] The evidence from Dura-Europos that really has the quality to make the town look 'untypical' is therefore the idiosyncratic evidence related to its Palmyrene inhabitants. In other words, it is not Dura that is untypical, but Palmyra that has the capacity to make Dura (to the modern and perhaps also ancient observer) look untypical - even when in reality the impact of Palmyrene culture on the society of Dura-Europos and its surrounding region was not as great as the quality of the evidence may make it out. From that perspective, I would argue that Dura-Europos might still be called 'potentially our best case study for social and religious life in a normal Near Eastern small town under the early and high empire'. And as regards Palmyra? "Now that is different."[170]

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reception of the Dura Europos synagogue paintings', in E.S. Gruen (ed.), *Cultural Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean* (Los Angeles, 2011) 288-306; K.B. Stern, 'Mapping devotion in Roman Dura Europos: reconsideration of the Synagogue ceiling', *American Journal of Archaeology* 114 (2010) 473-504; ead., 'Tagging sacred space in the Dura Europos Synagogue', *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 25 (2012) 171-194; T. Rajak, 'The Dura-Europos synagogue: images of a competitive community', in L.R. Brody and G.L. Hoffman (eds.), *Dura Europos: Crossroads of Antiquity* (Chestnut Hill, Mass., 2011) 141-154.

[169] In addition to the bibliography cited above (n.87), cf. I. Haynes, *Blood of the Provinces. The Roman* Auxilia *and the Making of Provincial Society from Augustus to the Severans* (Oxford, 2013) 198-206.

[170] I have copied the final sentence of the last paragraph of C. Howgego, 'Coinage and identity in the Roman provinces', in id., V. Heuchert and A. Burnett (eds.), *Coinage and Identity in the Roman Provinces* (Oxford, 2005) 1-17, at 17, in the context of his argument that the minting by cities in the Roman world formed part of a shared general pattern - despite the coinage of individual cities emphasising its exclusiveness and differentiation: "And where is the civic coinage of Palmyra, either before or after it became a *colonia* under Severus or Caracalla? Splendid Palmyra produced only vast quantities of very small and badly made bronzes, which some have thought to be *tesserae* rather than coins, but which may rather belong within a Parthian tradition of small change. Only a very few of the coins name the city at all (in Greek), none depict or name a Roman emperor, and none reveal the status of the city. Now that is different."

PLATE I: Funerary relief from Palmyra. Louvre catalogue no.AO 18174. © Ted Kaizer.

PLATE II: detail of Plate I. © Ted Kaizer.